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LETTERS

FROM

MRS. PALMERSTONE

TO

HER DAUGHTER.

Printed by Richard Taylor and Co., Shoe-Lane, London.

LETTERS

FROM

MRS. PALMERSTONE

TO

HER DAUGHTER;

INCULCATING

MORALITY

BY

ENTERTAINING NARRATIVES.

BY MRS. HUNTER,
OF NORWICH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR
LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1810.

MRS. PALMERSTONE'S LETTERS

TO

HER DAUGHTER.

LETTER VII.

THE CARD PARTY,

WITH THE

HISTORY OF THE STANLEY FAMILY.

MY DEAR ELIZA,

I AM not one of those who regard a passive obedience and blind submission on the part of the child as the best security for reasonable hopes on that of the parent: much less do I think them the suitable means of providing for those trials in this life, on which depends her happiness in a more perfect state of existence.

You are called upon as a rational being, and as created ultimately for immortality,

to act a part more honourable and more decided than can be acted by one who is the mere instrument of the will of another. The only guard which can effectually defend us from sin and error must be clear and precise ideas of that which is salutary and good, and of that which is pernicious and wicked.

You are a reasonable and an accountable being; but you are yet too young, and too uninformed, to direct with safety your own conduct. Providence has wisely and mercifully committed this season of your life to the care and guidance of others; and with abounding mercy to you, these are parents, forcibly impressed with a due sense of the authority thus delegated to them.

In this dispensation of goodness, I doubt not but that my Eliza will find strong inducements for gratitude; for most assuredly no blessing in this world can be put in competition with that of being protected and instructed by good parents. You must, however, seriously reflect that neither their zeal nor their abilities can exempt you from

from the necessity of exercising your own reason, nor excuse those errors which the neglect of so doing may and will produce.

There is no period of life, beyond the short stage of infancy, in which we are not called upon to employ the faculties of our own minds, and the powers of our own understandings; and nature has wisely proportioned our field of action to their dawning strength. We soon perceive the distinguishing and essential differences between a good action and a bad one, between truth and falsehood, gratitude and ingratitude; and as our minds mature, and our sphere of life enlarges, we become more and more able to investigate the motives of moral action and our own conduct.

I believe that, young as you are, you are prepared for the inferences which I mean to draw from what I have already advanced, and on which I rest my hopes of being useful to you: for I think all authority which does not rest on the solid basis of reason, usurpation; and in consequence of

this opinion I have, with the most diligent attention, made you the arbiter of my conduct respecting you in every instance in which I conceived you capable of judging. I have constantly and clearly laid before you my reasons for privations, and my motives for indulgence; convinced that you would contemplate kindness as much in the former as in the latter, and that you would perceive your advantage and happiness closely linked with both. By this mode of treatment I think you have acquired a facility of judging, and many marks and indications that belong to a discriminating mind, and a quick perception of truth and utility.

But youth, my Eliza, is liable to inconsideration, and reason and conscience are sometimes silenced by the various and alluring objects which fancy and desire place in their way. If their vigilance be suspended, if their authority be suffered to sleep, at this period of your life, the consequences are doubly mischievous; for you will not only have to fear the evils which are inse-

parably

parably attached to acting without their restraint, but even their power of governing you will be lost; for the reason and conscience which are not diligently exercised will soon become torpid and useless.

The rest of this letter is intended as a wholesome exercise for the *best part* of your mind; and I cheerfully expect from it a decision which shall satisfy me that you will not like a coward fly from the appeal.

During your cousins' late visit we admitted a card-table into our arrangements for the evening's recreation. As our guests, it became in some measure incumbent upon us to consult their taste, rather than our own, in the choice of our amusement. You very cheerfully submitted, and only pleaded your entire ignorance of every sort of game. I proposed a party at commerce, as being easy for you to learn, and convenient for our number. The first evening was devoted to teaching you the game; and I believe you will recollect your wild spirits, which overset the table and candles in preparing

the

the room for a game of blindman's buff, which was unanimously agreed upon at the close of your first lesson, and in which you wanted no instruction or guide beyond your agility.

No sooner was the tea-equipage removed on the following evening, than our young guests clamorously demanded the cards. Your silence was disregarded, and the circle was formed round the table. You languidly distributed the fish, saying that you thought the night *remarkably cold*, and wished for a country dance. George Stanley, without noticing your wishes, asked me what I chose to make the pool-basket. I replied, smiling, that I would for that night be the bank, and dropped into the basket half-a-guinea. Insensibly you became attentive, and caught the eagerness of your companions; saw the defeat of your next neighbour's hand with triumph; and admitted, or refused, the suggested plans of your adviser George Stanley as your own prudence suggested; and finally shared the

pool

pool with him. The rest of the party saw not this convention with satisfaction. Charlotte said that George had good reasons for his advice, and that those who went partners ought not to sit by each other. George coloured, but laughed at what he could not answer. A few nights tired me of commerce, and I contented myself with being, in appearance, an unconcerned spectator, quietly occupying one corner of the table.

Methinks I already see the ingenuous blush, mantling, if I may use a poetical expression, on my Eliza's cheek, at the recollection of *that* which could not possibly escape my notice, or my disapprobation. You will with confusion retrace in your mind your share of all the bungling tricks and awkward finesse which so disgraced the party . . . Playing for the advantage of those with whom you had secretly settled to share the gains Signs and winks, and concerted plans, to cheat poor Sophy and Charles of their money, and of all chance of

success

success Combinations, in a word, which imposed upon them in all points but that of removing from them their suspicions of unfair play. These were avowed with rudeness, nay, sometimes with violence and even tears. I interfered not, but passively saw anger sparkle in every eye by turns; flushed faces, and sullen retorts; and every proposal for more cheerful and innocent amusement rejected.

In this way has my Eliza passed the greater part of the evenings during the last month. You are now an adept at several sorts of games, and you have acquired talents of which you have no reason to be proud. Last week your cousins left us. Shall I be unjust if I say that you have appeared to regret the absence of the card-table, more than the removal of your companions and friends? On the evening of their departure you appeared disinclined to every sort of occupation; the music-book which you wanted was mislaid; you had no lake for your roses. I proposed reading.

You

You yawned, and pleaded your fears that you had caught cold; you approached the sofa, and caressed Fidèle for half an hour; then stretched yourself on the cushions: at length, half hesitating, you said that you would show me some tricks with the cards, that George Stanley had taught you. I smiled, and with great alertness the cards were produced. You then asked me, whether I ever played at piquet. I answered in the negative, adding that I had entirely forgotten it Fidèle was again referred to The evening was long and dull; and you were not sorry to retire to your room.

The following day was more propitious. Mrs. Beaumont, with a few of your grandfather's old friends, passed it with us. After tea, Mrs. Beaumont proposed cards. "I hear," said she, "Eliza, that your wild Irish cousins have initiated you into all the secrets of this sublime art." You blushed, Eliza, crimson deep. "But," added she, "good-nature now will conduct us to the card-table; for poor doctor Craven is be-

come so deaf that he derives no amusement from conversation." The card-table was placed; your grandfather determined for a pool at commerce, the stake to be half-guineas; and, smiling on you, he added, "I will be my Eliza's banker to-night." "I will have no partnership," cried I gaily, "without conditions. I mean to win the money, and I now offer half of it, with half the honour annexed to gaining it." "Let us hear your conditions," cried every one. "Why," replied I, "I mean, with the money to clothe a poor half-naked girl who brings us water-cresses. I saw her this morning, shivering with cold and misery; and I almost blushed at the survey of the comforts with which I was surrounded."—Every one eagerly declared that the pool was the property of Hannah, the water-cress girl, and that the winner should have the pleasure of applying the money to the relief of her wants. I exerted all my skill; Mrs. Beaumont lost, in her attention to the game, the desire of chatting; your grandfather

father studied, with profound wisdom, every chance and card. But Eliza Palmerstone was listless and unconcerned!—you rose after depositing your last stake, retired to the corner of the fire, and took up a news-paper. I was the winner: and thus ended *our* card-party.

This morning Hannah, with her mother, paid me a visit of thanks; for I had lost no time in appropriating the money to its destined purpose. I had now the satisfaction of seeing that my child's mind had recovered its natural tone; your eyes beamed with pleasure, as you surveyed the comfortable appearance of these indigent people. "Why," cried you, transported, "they are *both* supplied with new clothes! How did you manage to buy so many things with so little money? I could never have supposed that four or five guineas could have made them so clean and comfortable."—"The wants of the poor and needy," replied I, "are not *costly*; but Hannah's are not yet quite removed: I wish she had a good warm cloak;

cloak; and were it not for the fear of tiring our friends, I would win a second pool for her sake. How stands your purse, Eliza?" Shall I not pain your gentle nature by recalling the confusion with which, hanging on my bosom, you whispered that you were pennyless?

Mrs. Clarke retired with my poor Hannah and her mother; and I mildly resumed the conversation by saying that 'those who played at cards ought to be prepared for fortune in all her caprices.'—"Undoubtedly," replied you; "but George and Charlotte Stanley can *win* without being indebted to her favour."—"Not unless they *cheat*," answered I. A blush and downcast eye was your reply. "However," continued I, "be not uneasy: Hannah shall be no sufferer: I will engage for the cloak." You burst into tears, and said, sobbing, "But *I* cannot be the donor; my folly has prevented *that* and more."—It is necessary, my child, that I should detail the whole of the confession which followed.

For

For a fortnight you had forgotten to pay for the nursing of your protégée, John Dunning's motherless infant; and for several weeks you had seen yourself imposed upon with patience, in the vain hope of being in the issue a match for meanness and craft with their own weapons. You will in a moment perceive my reasons for stating thus minutely that which possibly you consider as having been thoroughly understood. It may be you are deceived: probably you have not traced in this apparently useless detail of your conduct, and that of your associates, some of the most striking features and hideous traits of the practised and habitual gamester. Many, I doubt not, of these lost and miserable men (would I could confine my observation to men only!) have received the first rudiments of their pernicious art, and the first impulse of their direful passion, in the nursery, or at least in the earliest opening of their youth. Then it was that the first principles of rectitude were violated: then it was that the uncorrupted

rupted heart first admitted the cruel and contaminating love of money: then was engendered that miserable and delusive preference of *self*, and all the poor and base motives of exclusive interest. *There*, and *then*, were practised the tricks of imposition, of over-reaching the unwary or more ignorant. Thus prepared they meet the world, and, alas! exhibit passions fatal to themselves, and to all who are connected with them. The profligate and inveterate love of gaming, my Eliza, contains in it a depravity beyond *any* of which you can form an idea....I would call it a destroying dæmon, if I were asked to fix to it any appropriate term. Yes, I would say, it is a destroying dæmon, which exults in laying waste all the resources of the human mind, and trampling down all the fences of human prudence. It acts like an overwhelming deluge, sweeping from the heart of man all the sweet charities of human life, and leaving nothing behind but a cold indifference for the happiness of others, and for himself

self the horrors of cowardly despair, or the cruel triumphs of sordid interest.

With these impressions now on my mind, with the recollection of that misery to families which has within the narrow sphere of my experience resulted from the love of gaming, and which hourly calls for pity, I have lost sight of the principal view of this letter; for I hope there can be little danger of your adding to the number of the unprincipled and daring herd of gamesters.

It may not however be amiss to inquire into your opinion of the *woman*, who under less glaring colours, and a less offensive form, sacrifices her health, her time, and her first duties to the card-table. What shall we say of the infirm and aged votaries of this all-subduing incroacher? what shall we say of those, whose talents and time have been wasted in acquiring skill in a game at cards?

I once, when a girl, called upon an old lady of this sort, with my mother: she was far advanced in life, and had been for many years confined to her room by lameness.

We

We found her in her bed, where indeed most of her hours were passed: she was propped by a number of pillows, and busily employed in assorting a quantity of cards. The interest which she apparently took in not permitting her woman to disturb them, confirmed me in the idea that she was separating them—till she again cautioned the woman not to touch the cards, for she had just got the game. My mother smiled, and asked at what game she was playing. "Do you not know it?" said she with wonderful vivacity. "It is called *patience*; and I promise you it has not that name for nothing, for I am often five or six hours getting the game. It is very amusing, however; and frequently consoles me for the delay of my party." She then deplored the desertion of her old friends, and the ingratitude of the world.

Young as I was, I could not help reflecting, during this lamentation, that she had entirely overlooked the best possible apology for the absence of two-thirds of those of whom she complained,—that they were in their

their graves. I make no comments on this anecdote: I only wish to contrast it, by placing before you the revered and venerable Mrs. Sinclair, now in her eightieth year, seated in her easy chair, to which she has for years past been passively conducted by her affectionate and assiduous friends, who surround her with respectful attention, and eager interest to profit from her still animated and elegant conversation, in which wisdom and goodness preside. We become neither saints nor sinners, my dear Eliza, by any sudden impulse of the mind: there is a time when, in regard to *all*, you may say with the poet,

> Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
> As to be hated needs but to be seen.

But this state of moral rectitude will not suffice to keep off the encroachments of vice. She is too subtle to show at once all the horrors of her undisguised and appalling front. It is by silent and insidious approaches under borrowed forms that she gradually

gradually prepares the mental eye to meet her without terror. It is by petty trespasses on reason and conscience that she renders herself familiar to the view. It is by small steps that she leads mankind to confound the simple and unerring voice of truth, and prepares them for her future open and daring triumph. Virtue takes the same progressive march. She yields not to the cowardly and indolent candidate her gracious influences: these must be sought resolutely, diligently, step by step. The purpose of becoming virtuous must be sustained by active endeavours, by vigilance, and by the conviction that we seek that which will recompense our labours. This is the price of every thing worth attainment; and your simple reason will acknowledge that the purpose of our existence, the basis on which rest all our hopes of happiness here, and acceptance hereafter, is an object which exceeds all others. Be then prepared to meet the difficulties which you will encounter in your attainment of it. Your success depends on

self.

self-denial and self-command. It is by little combats that the volunteer for glory acquires strength and courage for more arduous trials. Shall I not trust my candidate for glory?...Yes, and with cheerful hopes. Be not therefore surprised that I do not interdict you from the occasional amusement of card-playing.

At my entrance into the world, I had heard all that prudence could advance in support of an absolute prohibition of cards, and all that ingenuity could produce in their favour. My opinions were not decided by either of these arguments. I knew that the whole business depended on my estimating the question according to its precise value. I was a member of society, and my power went not beyond the control of my own actions. Custom has privileged this recreation, and as a recreation I had only to qualify it. I discovered that under this point of view it contained nothing for me to dread; for real and unaffected virtue is not austere, but with good-humoured ease can

quit

quit her throne to solace the weak child of mortality, can smile at its toys and sports, whilst her guardian hand upholds its feeble steps. I prescribed then certain limitations from which I have never yet been tempted to deviate; and I play at cards, when called upon in society, on exactly the same principles which produce my cheerful compliance with the taste and humour of those to whose amusement I give up any other portion of my time.

I was once, and only once, put to the trouble of explaining these principles. Soon after my marriage I met at Bath a very elegant and agreeable woman, who, like myself, had lately changed her name. She appeared rather more new to the world than myself, and was, I believe, younger. We became much acquainted, and often met in public parties. One evening, at the rooms, a gentleman brought me a pressing invitation from Mrs. S—— to make one at an unlimited loo table she was forming for the duchess of ———. In polite and decided

terms

terms I signified that it was a game at which I never played; and, with compliments, sent him back to the card room with this negative. In a few minutes Mrs. S—— was at my elbow, and with an air of much concern concluded her repeated request by saying, "Surely, Mrs. Palmerstone, you will not refuse the duchess! She sent me expressly to solicit your company." I smiled, but with seriousness gave her to understand that I was under the government of an authority which would not yield to any *title*. I repeated my negative with firmness, and with fewer excuses. "Do you play unlimited loo, madam?" said Mrs. S—— to my fair friend, who was leaning on my arm. "No," said I with quickness: "this lady means to dance. You must not disappoint Mr. Palmerstone," added I, seeing the flush of vanity on her cheek.—"I do not think," replied she, "that we shall see either of our husbands to-night: the gentlemen when at Bristol, you know, left it undetermined." —"In that case, then," cried Mrs. S——, "you

"you may safely join the duchess's party. We will relinquish you, if you are called upon." The young lady, with some apology for quitting me, immediately followed Mrs. S—— to the card-room.

At the usual hour of retiring I sought my companion, and her countenance spoke her losses: she was agitated and flushed, and with reluctance listened to my saying that I waited for her. In our way home, she observed that I had been very fortunate in my refusal to play: "My compliance," sighed she, "has cost me thirty guineas to-night." —"I rejoice to hear it," said I, affectionately pressing her hand: "your lesson is cheap: profit from it." She was silent. "I wish," resumed she, "I had refused the duchess's invitation for to-morrow evening." —"Nothing can be so easy," answered I with vivacity: "and were it difficult, you ought to do it." She was again silent, and we parted.

The next morning I saw her in the pump-room, arm in arm with the duchess, and instantly

stantly marked her for one of the loo party. At the end of the season she had some embarrassments with the trades-people, which circulated with the usual celerity of Bath anecdotes; and the first advantage that she gained from her acquaintance with the duchess, was the perfect indifference with which she met this disgrace. She had however paid largely for her initiation, and now boldly quitted the appellation of a dupe, to sustain with firmness and an unabashed face the more disgraceful one of a *duper*, in which station she still holds an eminent place in the fashionable world.

You will easily detect the true cause for this adoption of a character so contemptible, and you will perceive that there are other inducements besides *avarice* which lead a *woman* to the card-table.

This young woman was without even a taste for the amusements of a card-table. She was extremely lively, and loved dancing: but to make one in the duchess's card-party was an allurement which her vanity could not

not resist, nor her resolution overcome. She saw not the snare then ready for her, and which has held her captive ever since in a state of degradation from which her rank in life cannot shelter her; for it does not prevent the honest and upright from viewing her conduct with pity and reprobation.

Some apology for the lamentable predilection which your cousins have shown for the card-table may arise from the history of their unfortunate parents; and candour and charity may perhaps find in their present disposition to tricking and cheating, more cause for pity and compassion than surprise.

Mrs. Stanley, the mother of our late guests, was left an orphan at seventeen with a fortune of twenty thousand pounds. Her father appointed Mr. Palmerstone guardian and executor to his will; but the peculiar charge of her education and care of her person were given to his own sister, a widow lady. This regulation was not made without

out judgement. Mrs. Falkland was a worthy woman, and loved her niece tenderly.

The first winter's introduction to the polite world in Dublin, the place of Mrs. Falkland's residence, brought to the beautiful miss Fairfax's notice and acquaintance the handsome and agreeable Mr. Stanley. He was then about twenty-three: his father had died when he was an infant, and a considerable estate had devolved to him, to which were annexed the savings of a long minority. His mother, whose idol he was, enjoyed an ample jointure, which she spent in Dublin with the reputation of a generous and pleasant woman. Nature had indeed been as bountiful to Mrs. Stanley as it will be found she is to all her children; for she had bestowed on her a sound mind and a good disposition. But a neglected education had confined the one to the pleasures of good living and the card-table, and brought the other under the control of passion and frivolous modes of life.

No mistakes, nor any weaknesses, how-

ever, in Mrs. Stanley's character had been able to damp the spirit and talents of her son. His understanding was acute, and his heart excellent. Under a wise and steady guidance, young Stanley would have been an honour to his country, and a blessing to his family. Dazzled by the brilliancy of his parts, and the manly graces of his person, Mrs. Stanley had no enjoyment in his absence, and, whilst a mere youth, gave him unlimited access to her purse, and the amusements of her house and table: at fifteen he betted guineas on his mother's cards, and, with all the ardour natural to his mind, adopted a taste for play.

Thus prepared, he entered into the possession of his own large fortune; and with all the characteristics of a young, generous, and unsuspecting Irishman, he invited rapacity, and opened his heart to treachery and fraud. He had already gone deeply in his mad career, when the charms of Charlotte Fairfax caught his attention, and gave to his ardent mind more honourable pursuits. His assiduities

duities pleased her, and he won her consent, with that of her aunt, to apply to your grandfather for her hand. Mr. Palmerstone was neither a stranger to young Stanley's propensity to gaming, nor to the depredations which had already embarrassed him. The result of this application to the uncle and prudent guardian of Charlotte Fairfax was a refusal of his overtures, accompanied with a manly and frank communication of the motives on which that refusal was solidly grounded. Mr. Stanley endeavoured to remove this obstacle; but your grandfather told him, that his opposition was, and would ever be, inflexible to a man impelled by his passions and his associates to effect his own ruin; and that the time would inevitably arrive, when he would acknowledge the integrity to which he owed the loss of a woman whom he loved, and whom he now solicited to share that ruin.

Stanley's high spirit rose at this rebuke: but the decided character and cool firmness of your grandfather were happily qualified

to meet his impetuosity; and they parted, with their respective resolutions and cold civility. Mr. Stanley did not, however, relinquish his hopes; and unfortunately, favoured by Mrs. Falkland, and warmly supported by his mother's interest with Charlotte, he prevailed upon her, still a minor, to marry him.

My father was sensibly hurt by this imprudent step. He had been anxiously explicit with his ward and her aunt, and in the most tender and parental terms had cautioned them to refuse Stanley's visits. They had engaged to do so, and on their promise he relied when he returned to London. Justly offended by the conduct of a niece whom he affectionately loved, all correspondence was dropped for a time. He was however called upon, in consequence of his trust, to an interview with the young couple; and Stanley, with the generosity natural to him, coincided with my father in his wise plan of securing to the children of the marriage the half of their

their mother's fortune, and settling the residue on her for her life. This duty performed, Mr. Palmerstone, with sorrow, left Mrs. Stanley to the fate which she had so imprudently sought.

For some years she experienced all the difficulties belonging to the fluctuating fortune of desperate gamblers. Revelry and abundance were linked with despondence and want, and alternately ruled in her house. Stanley was now the father of five children, whom he loved; and his wife, who still retained an influence in a heart which nothing could harden to indifference for her, was now approaching her sixth confinement. He returned home one night from his customary haunts, despair in his heart, and all its horrors depicted on his countenance. He rushed frantically into the apartment where his anxious wife was watching his return with apprehensive forebodings. He gazed on her in convulsive agony, and, throwing himself with violence on the floor, groaned, "Charlotte, you are a beggar!"

He

He fainted, and, in a state of insensibility, was conveyed to his bed. On the following day Mrs. Stanley was delivered of a dead child, and herself expired on the third.

Mr. Stanley was thus awfully awakened from his delusion. The blow that annihilated every domestic comfort roused the dormant powers of his mind. In the anguish and sickness which nearly brought him to the grave, he remembered his children, and with manly fortitude embraced those duties which he owed to them. His integrity suggested the most honourable means of extricating them from the ruin which hung over them. His creditors did justice to a man who threw himself and his concerns on their mercy, and who voluntarily yielded up that which knavery and chicane could have withheld. From his once flourishing fortune they allowed for his support not so many hundreds as his rent-roll had contained thousands; and Mr. Stanley retired from his splendid establishment, which was given up, to seek shelter with

with his mother for his children and himself, till he could settle his future plans in life.

After mature deliberation, he resolved to retire into the country with his family. For this purpose he solicited from his mother the use of a large manor-house which was included in her jointure, and some land near it, which he had long considered as an excellent subject for agricultural speculation.

Mrs. Stanley had not met the misfortunes of her beloved son with indifference. She was tenderly attached to her daughter, and had unfeignedly lamented her death. She besought him with the most earnest entreaties to commit the children to her charge, and to seek, in a way more suitable to his birth and talents, that fortune which had so cruelly escaped him. Stanley firmly said that he was not seeking fortune, but peace; and that it was only in retirement that he should expect it. The manor-house was a hundred miles from Dublin. Mrs. Stanley

Stanley had seen it only once; but thirty years had not erased from her memory its desolate appearance, or the wretched cabins which surrounded it.

Her heart sunk at the retrospection; and she offered her son her whole income, on condition of sharing his roof and bread in Dublin.

Stanley steadily persisted in his resolve, and made the most active preparations for his journey. His mother, unable to live with comfort at a distance from her son and his children, nobly determined to accompany him in his retirement, and with her income render it the seat of abundance. It is more than probable, had Mrs. Stanley's mind been as vigorous as her affections were strong, that this sacrifice of the habits of her life would have been amply recompensed by the happiness which she communicated, and the improvement of children so dear to her: and this period of her life would have borne the distinguished marks of wisdom. The reformed Stanley pressed arduously forward

forward in his plans of œconomy and industry. A new and superior tie now united him to his mother; he reverenced her for her goodness to his children, and devoted every hour of his leisure to her. But, unfortunately for Mrs. Stanley, there was no neighbourhood within her reach, and she languished in the midst of increasing comforts.

Her grandchildren were healthy and happy, her son placid and indefatigable, his prospects brightening, and his mind established in its salutary purpose: but, destitute of those resources which youth and cultivation must prepare, Mrs. Stanley found her time burthensome, and all these comforts insipid. She sunk into indolence and dejection, and attributed the weakness of her mind to the infirmities of age.

Nothing was now left of the former cheerful Mrs. Stanley, but her fondness for her children, which insensibly became as pernicious to them as it encroached on her own ease. The time however soon arrived

when in their turn they contributed to her amusement as much as she had done to theirs. As a new plaything, they built houses with cards, and by gradual steps learned a more pernicious use of them. But it happened that the active and ungovernable children often preferred their own turbulent pastimes to their grandmother's plum-cake and card-table. She was reduced to bribe a compliance which she was unable to command; and the spoils of her purse became a powerful incentive to their obedience.

An itinerant pedlar, who frequently called at the house with toys, had instructed the young people in the use of money; and they now became eager for occasions, in which their address was sure of success. In this manner have the last two years been employed. Mr. Stanley, from whom I had my information, assured me, that in the winter the greatest part of the day and every evening were devoted to shuffling and cutting the cards, and that his children were

adepts

adepts at most games played. His remonstrances were answered by tears, and his proposal of sending the eldest boy and girl to school threw his mother into a bed of sickness.

"Under these harassing circumstances," continued he, "I still deferred the execution of my anxious wishes. It wrung my soul to see my mother's distress; and my duty thus divided I predicted would render me and my children miserable. George was almost fourteen, and yet I still hesitated.

"The unexpected visit of an old card-playing friend of my mother, and for which we were indebted to her losses in her daily occupation, produced a change favourable to my designs. The old ladies were never weary of piquet, and the seasoning Mrs. Eyebright gave to it by her good humour seemed to renovate my mother's spirits. The children, finding their ill-gotten gains diverted into another channel, became jealous of the stranger, and were rude to her; and she in return advised my mother to send them to such

such schools as would teach them manners. I seized this propitious moment of pettish a ger, and wrote to your father, madam. You are not surprised that Mr. Palmerstone should bestow that friendship and favour on a man humbled by a sense of his own misconduct, which he disdained to give to his vices and prosperous fortune. He has met my change like a man, and like a christian; and he has confirmed and strengthened every good purpose of my mind, by convincing me that his friendship springs from his honest esteem. I have, in consequence of his advice, settled the terms of my two boys' admission to a private academy. Doctor Armstrong takes only six pupils; and he is not less recommended by the conduct of those whom he has instructed, than by your father and my other friends. I now rely on your goodness for the care of placing my two girls; for I mean to leave them also at school. The moment is pressing, my dear madam!" He sighed deeply and paused. "Alas!" added he, "well may the bird

who

who has been ensnared tremble, though free, at the view of that fatal twig which concealed the tempting mischief!....My children may escape; but it must be now, or they are lost like....." He again stopped, and, hastily bowing, left me.

I took the first occasion of resuming this conversation, as it related to your cousins. It is settled that they shall remain for some time where they are now placed, and finish their education in a good London school. I recommended one measure, which Mr. Stanley gratefully adopted, namely, the taking your old friend Mrs. Betterson with him to the manor-house. She has talents fully competent to the care of little Sophia, and has integrity for every duty. She takes her child with her, who will be a companion for her charge. When I mentioned this difficulty, Mr. Stanley very judiciously observed, that 'had she made none to leaving her child in the hands of strangers, he should have thought too meanly of her to have intrusted her with his.' Betterson's faithful

ful services about your person, I trust, will now be recompensed by a more permanent ease than succeeded to her unfortunate marriage, and in time she will recover her spirits, which have been depressed by the death of her industrious husband.'

I intimated to Mr. Stanley the good sense and pleasing manners of this worthy woman; and advised him to avail himself of them, to secure his mother from the depredations of her Dublin visitor. He smiled, and thanked me for the hint, adding, 'that he believed the lady had already supplied herself with the means of figuring in her usual card-parties, and that she was impatient to join them.'

The evening preceding Mr. Stanley's departure, I found him with my father in the library: his eyes were red with weeping, and I felt conscious that I had unwittingly interrupted their conversation. In some confusion I was about to retire; when Mr. Stanley respectfully took my hand and attempted to speak: but his voice failed him,

and

and again he wept. I was exceedingly affected, and, woman-like, my tears flowed from sympathy. "Come, my dear Stanley," said my father affectionately, "let us have no more of this: you must not indulge in these tender retrospections. Remember that you are a father, and that, in order to perform the duties of one, you must be firm and a man."—"Alas!" answered Mr. Stanley, "repentance cannot extinguish memory; it reclaims, and will I trust save, the misguided and erring soul: but in conducting it to the path of safety it cannot make that path delightful: it cannot restore the animating prospects which opened on the spring of life: it cannot bid those blossoms of innocence, laid in the dust, rear again their fair forms: it cannot present that happiness, once so madly abused.....No, Mr. Palmerstone," added he with mournful emphasis, "no, it cannot *do this*. Repentance does much in reconciling man to his supreme Judge; but there is a burthen which guilt must bear to the grave." He was again suffocated,

suffocated, and, apparently unconscious of having witnesses to his distress, murmured out, "My fond, my faithful, sainted Charlotte!" His voice sunk, and he rested his head on the back of the sofa.

A silence of some minutes ensued. At length my father, with evident emotion, said, with solemnity, "*Mr. Stanley!*"—He started, and, collecting himself, approached me. "You have heard," said he, "of the unworthy husband of Charlotte Fairfax; you have seen him under the character of a father to her children, and your good heart has felt for him. Pity his sorrows; excuse his weakness, if you think it needful. Watch over children deprived of such a mother as yourself, and may you be blest in your child by seeing her worthy of you!" He hurried out of the room, and retired to his own till supper, where he appeared with his usual composure.

"Poor Stanley," said my father, wiping his eyes, "had been talking of his wife when you entered. It appears that she had

repeatedly

repeatedly urged him to adopt the plan which he has so steadily pursued since her death. She was perfectly acquainted with his difficulties, and had with prudence and judgement assisted him in arranging his accounts. By giving up her settlement they found that they should have four thousand pounds beyond the provision which his creditors would be induced, by a formal relinquishment of his estates and effects, to leave him; and with exulting joy she placed before him a prospect of contented ease. 'We shall be rich,' exclaimed she, 'rich in ourselves and in our children, rich in a freedom from care and tumult! Let us go, my dear husband, and in peace forget the vexations which now harass us.' The subdued Stanley solemnly promised, that as soon as she was in a condition to travel he would quit Dublin, and call his creditors together; that in the mean time the manor-house should be prepared for her reception. Mrs. Stanley either believed or appeared to believe him, and entered into

into such measures as were necessary for supplying him with the sum of money that his exigencies demanded. A few short weeks elapsed. His worthy associates discovered that he had yet something to lose, and with their usual diabolical arts lured him once more to their toils. The smallest excess of wine rendered him an easy prey. They knew this, and in one night finished his ruin. You know the event which followed; but I believe that you are unacquainted with the wild despair of the wretched and deluded Stanley. Providence, in its gracious and merciful purposes, saved him from his daring and dreadful attempt. The strength of his constitution resisted the shocking trial; and the vigour of his mind once directed to good views, will, I fear not, sustain him through the important part which he has yet to act in life. But his cheerfulness is for ever clouded, and his enjoyments are bounded to the performance of duties once qualified with a felicity beyond the ordinary portion of man: this he has lost;

lost; and unhappily the remembrance of it embitters his days. Nothing can produce a balm for his wounded peace but the good conduct of his children, for whom he is anxious to a degree proportioned to the loss which he deplores. We will, my dear Angelica, assist him in this care. I need not call upon you with arguments to second my views. Your heart and your principles will direct you."

My Eliza will with joy contribute her share to designs so benevolent. She will have frequent opportunities of enforcing the precepts of her mother by an example worthy of them. She will exhibit, in her own moderation and prudence, that test of good sense which regulates all our pursuits. She will convince her cousins and future *friends*, that virtue is human happiness; improvement, the means of attaining it; and that no enjoyment can be reached but with pure hands and innocence of heart. She will teach them to disdain the puerile amusements to which they have been unfortunately

fortunately introduced, and which will be tasteless and tiresome when their minds are provided with better materials for recreation than a pack of cards: and, *above all*, she will impress on their hearts a love of that religion which banishes from hers the pride of superior advantages; advantages, which, as they have arisen solely from more happy circumstances, directly point to humility and the most pious gratitude.

In the summer vacation we shall have our young pupils with us. I promise myself the most honourable contest with your grandfather, in which even our defeat will have its recompense; but we will not expect it. Our two lovely girls shall rival his boys, and one honest and good purpose unite us all. Adieu, my dear girl! I have in this letter given you many plans to arrange; for I mean to leave to your direction the accommodation of your guests at the abbey; and you will, without doubt, think some alteration necessary in your apartments.

I remain yours affectionately,

A. PALMERSTONE.

Letter VIII.

THE MOTHER-IN-LAW.

It is my Eliza's post-day; and after six weeks interruption of my accustomed punctuality, methinks I see you watching with anxious eye Betty's entrance with the usual packet. You shall not, my dear girl, be disappointed, although our late excursion has brought on an accumulation of domestic arrangements, that press more than ordinarily on my time.

The pleasures which we have lately quitted, on our departure from Mr. Berry's hospitable family and delightful place, I will leave for the subject of your pen, not doubting but that you will expatiate on them with satisfaction. I shall, as usual, endeavour to extract something from the occurrences at Browhill, for your improvement. It is the morning previous to our departure

ture which furnishes me with materials for this letter.

Mr. Berry, at the breakfast-table, mentioned the recent marriage of our friend Mr. Fortescue. You suddenly put an end to every particular detail, by exclaiming in a voice of compassion, "Oh! what! is Mr. Fortescue married? What sad news! The poor miss Fortescues have then at last got a mother-in-law! How sincerely do I pity them!" Mrs. Davenport smiled, and Mrs. Berry was prevented from speaking, by a sign from me, which was noticed by all present except yourself, and the subject was dropped.

A summons from Betty soon called us to our apartment. She waited my orders relative to our baggage, for which a waggon was waiting in order to convey it to the next market town. Betty was instantly informed of the melancholy intelligence you had received in the breakfast-room. Fresh lamentations and renewed commiseration! "Mr. Fortescue married! He who *seemed*

so fond of his children!' Betty was astonished. 'Some artful lady, she did not doubt. The poor young ladies would soon see the difference between their own dear mamma and a step-mother!'

Apparently engaged with my band-boxes, I listened patiently till Betty's indignation and compassion were exhausted, and then gravely observed, that Mr. Fortescue's friends were perfectly satisfied with his second choice, which had been some time known to them; and that I had the satisfaction of knowing the lady was a woman of rare and distinguished merit. Betty was silenced, and we left her much better employed than whilst animadverting on second marriages.

Your mind was however still busy on the subject, and you renewed it in the summer-house, whither we carried our lessons and work. You wondered 'how the miss Fortescues would behave to their new mamma; and how they would be able to conceal their grief.'—"Much of these difficulties

you

you so much fear," said I, "depends on the children, or rather on the good sense of those to whose care they have hitherto been intrusted: but," added I smiling, "you appear, my dear Eliza, to have a very particular interest in this event. What would you say were I to tell you that I have been more than once solicited to give you a father-in-law?" You coloured, and, clinging to my arms with starting tears, seemed to implore shelter from the hideous phantom I had conjured up. "What would you say," continued I, "were I to tell you that your grandfather earnestly importuned me to marry a second time?"—"Is it possible?" cried you: "and yet how tenderly he loves me!"—"The test of that affection which you so gratefully acknowledge," continued I with seriousness, "and which we both cherish for you, rests not altogether on my remaining in my present condition.

"Your grandfather was not inattentive to your happiness, or negligent of your interests, when he so warmly urged me to marry

marry again; and although I mean not to disclaim the share you had in the motives for my rejection of his advice, I will frankly tell you I had others, that also influenced my conduct very powerfully, and in which you had no share. You know the fatal accident which in one hour deprived you of a father. I was then in my eight-and-twentieth year, and you in your third. Your grandfather, on this dreadful extinction of his fondest and best hopes, yielded to the overwhelming shock: he sunk into despair, and was for several days deprived of his senses. His friends regarded him as irretrievably lost; and the physicians intimated that they had only one last effort to make. He was like a statue conducted towards the bed in which I lay sunk in unutterable woe: you were beside me. The physician watched attentively the moment that would annihilate every hope, or relieve the patient from his oppressive stupor. He gazed upon us with a vacant and unacknowledging eye, and was turning from the bed-side when you

caught his arm, and called "Papa." A deep groan, which still vibrates in my ear, at that moment burst from the heart of your unhappy grandfather: he sunk into the arms of his attending friends, and was instantly removed: doctor Mansfield snatching you up in his arms followed him. Nature now exerted her powers: tears, anxiously promoted and tenderly soothed, relieved Mr. Palmerstone, and quieted the apprehensions of his friends. His first return of reason was employed in cares for me: he bowed submissively to the will of Heaven, and taught me, by his resignation and patience, that temper of mind so necessary to my condition. His example strengthened me; his consolations, and his alone, reached my soul.

"From this time we became, my child, a sacred deposit left in his care, and he transferred to us all that interest and affection which before we had shared with his beloved and only son; in whose virtues and talents were centred the last hopes of his family.

family. We now made one household. I considered Mr. Palmerstone as the agent employed by a gracious Providence for my preservation and your happiness; and in return I solemnly, though silently, devoted the remainder of my days to his comforts. Your grandfather in the course of time perceived something of my purpose. His affection and delicacy took the alarm, and every personal consideration yielded to their suggestions.

"A gentleman much esteemed by Mr. Palmerstone, and who had been the intimate friend of my husband, repeatedly made me overtures of marriage; your grandfather urged his suit, and even your interests were brought in as an additional argument in his favour: but I well understood my own principles, and I persevered in a conduct conformable to them."

You listened to my discourse with profound attention, and we returned to the house in silence. I do not believe my Eliza

will be displeased by the recapitulation of a subject which then so deeply interested and affected her. On the following morning we commenced our journey home. The conversation naturally turned on the friends and the pleasures we had quitted. "I think," observed you, "I never saw such affection as appears to unite Mrs. Davenport and her daughter.... except indeed...." you pressed my hand. "It is," resumed you, "a pleasure to see them together! such harmony! such cordiality! and then those happy creatures, the miss Berrys, and their brothers! I thought no one on earth could be so happy as myself," added you, covering your grandfather's face with your redundant locks. "And yet," said I, assuming an ironical gravity, "poor Mrs. Davenport has the misfortune of being a mother-in-law in this happy family!" You blushed with surprise, and probably at the recollection of what had escaped you at the breakfast-table. Your grandfather smiled,

and

and changed the subject; but he was an agent in my design, and has amply supplied me with the means of its accomplishment.

I doubt not but by this time you have perceived it is my intention to eradicate from your mind a prejudice against a condition in life very frequently sustained with honour and integrity, and which is in a peculiar degree charged with severe duties and burthens.

Your grandfather's narrative of Mrs. Davenport's conduct under this reprobated title, will serve to convince you of the folly and injustice of indiscriminate censure.

I shall proceed without any prelude beyond that of telling you that the family as usual dispersed yesterday morning immediately after we left the room. Mr. Davenport repaired to the library to write letters for our conveyance to town, and Mrs. Berry to her girls. "Mrs. Davenport and myself," said Mr. Palmerstone, whose words I mean to adopt, were left tête-à-tête. 'I intend, my good friend,' said this charming

ing woman with her usual vivacity, 'to keep you a prisoner. I have owed you a grudge for some years: and this shall be the hour of retribution.

"'You have perceived,' continued she, taking up her knotting-bag, 'the odious appellation which you and some others of my very kind friends contrived to affix to my name. It is but just that you listen patiently to all the various griefs and mortifications which have resulted from your plots and contrivances with Davenport, to render me a *cruel step-mother*, instead of a handsome widow. How many sad events,' sighed she, 'have separated us since those smiling hours! And let me add,' pressing my hand affectionately, on observing my emotion—'let me add, my dear and venerable friend, how many blessings have marked that checquered interval!

"'From your hand my excellent Davenport received me,' continued she: 'you may remember we parted at the abbey-door; and, leaving you to answer all con-

gratulation

gratulations, we set out for Mr. Davenport's seat in Dorsetshire. I was then in my thirty-third year, and my boy George twelve. Our reception at my destined home had in it more of vulgar curiosity than of cordial welcome. All was in state, and we were ushered into the best drawing-room with sullen reverence. Poor Harriet was stationed in it, as fine as hands could make her, and, without doubt, had been tutored to receive her mother-in-law with her best curtsey: but no sooner did she see her father, than, unmindful of me, she ran into his arms and sobbed aloud. A very fat but comely woman joined her in these lamentations; and Frank Davenport stood confused and sad, with his eyes riveted to the carpet. A look from my husband sent Mrs. Nurse, as I found her to be, to her apartment: he then put the weeping child into my arms: she actually shrunk from my embrace, and again, as it were, sought the protecting wing of her father; who, to conceal his agitation,

tation, now presented his son to me and my George.

" ' A few questions relative to the occurrences which had happened in his absence succeeded; and the detail of the lameness of Frank's pony gave George an opportunity of showing his skill in farriery. The boys became interested in this conversation, and soon at their ease: this somehow led to *fishing*. George was at home again here: he produced his treasures of flies, and an appointment followed for the next morning to employ them in the finest trout-stream in England. Poor Harriet during this animated conversation remained silent and dejected: but I fortunately recollected some caricature prints we had picked up in our road from Bath: these were produced, and I had the satisfaction of seeing her pretty features relax into a smile. We supped tolerably composed, and not uncheerfully. Frank, on retiring for the night, took his father's hand, wishing him good night. I

held

held out mine. He saw my purpose, blushed deeply, saluted me with fervour, dropped his eyes, and then imploringly raised them to his sister. She fearfully advanced, and greatly distressed me by falling on my bosom and weeping bitterly. 'We shall meet to-morrow, my love,' said I, returning her to her father, who looked displeased: 'if it be a fine morning, we will go and give notice to the poor trout of your brothers' evil intentions.' They each took a passive hand, and conducted her, blinded by tears, to her room.

"'After they had quitted us, my husband expressed his tender fears lest I might have received an unfavourable impression of his child from her behaviour. I reassured him. 'I perfectly understand,' said I, 'all this business: I have not been so improvident as to be unprepared: be satisfied. You shall be jealous of this child's affection for me in less than a year, unless your confidence equals the love you cherish for me. Your children must be happy, or I miserable.' We then entered into some discus-

sions relative to the domestic concerns of the family.

" ' You may perceive already, my dear Susan,' said my worthy husband, ' that I repose all my cares on you; but I conjure you exert not your prudence at the expense of your comforts. I well know I have been too easy a master, and that by my indolence I have converted very good servants into very idle ones.' He then detailed to me the enormous increase of his house-bills, and the general neglect of his concerns, which had insensibly gained upon his domestics. ' They are,' said he, ' honest, but, like their master, love their ease. I wish to meet contented faces and cheerful obedience; and they see in mine that of a friend: but we all want regulation, and you must redress these grievances.'

" ' The next day Mrs. Dawson with much formality showed me the way through my new habitation; talked a great deal of her good and indulgent master; of the surprise it would be to some young ladies in the neighbour-

neighbourhood, to hear that he had brought home a lady. I dismissed my loquacious conductress at the door of Harriet's apartment, and entered. She was composed, but not gay; and in all her answers to my questions called me *madam*. Nurse was stately and reserved; and, I believe, thought my visit an intrusion. On asking her the age of her charge, she said, 'miss Harriet was just turned of eleven;' and voluntarily added, 'that her dear mother had been dead six years.' Her face flushed, and her eyes swam in tears. She suddenly stooped to tie anew Harriet's sash, which she had done the instant before apparently to her satisfaction.

"'The bustle of receiving visitors appeared to divert Harriet's mind from the contemplation of her misfortune: she was also much flattered by my attention to her dress. The stiff-boned stays gave place to the dimity corset; and the *Bath fashions* became with Harriet the standard of taste. Nurse observed, with jealous eyes, my growing influence,

fluence, but prudently yielded to an ascendency with which she found herself unequal to contest.

" ' Amongst our most early visitors were a Mr. and Mrs. Barnet, with a very handsome daughter. I concluded, from the little ceremony they observed on the occasion, that they were very intimate friends of my husband; for they surprised us at the breakfast table: but the cold civility of the mother and daughter tallied not with this idea, and I suspended my opinion for further knowledge. On their leaving us, I asked Harriet whether the ladies were near neighbours? —' Oh! yes,' answered she, ' within a walk; and miss Barnet is the sweetest-tempered young lady in the world ... She is so good, she comes herself to fetch me to pass the day with her and her sisters; and when I am there she amuses me in the most obliging manner, notwithstanding Nurse says she is very proud.'—The second time I met this family was at a large dinner party made in honour of the bride. Harriet, although

though highly gratified by going with us, seemed to derive her principal pleasure from seeing miss Barnet. The young lady appeared not to have forgotten her favourite. She placed her next her at table; and, to judge from the whispers which passed from ear to ear, had much to say and to hear.

" ' After dinner the lady of the house proposed a walk in the labyrinth; and quitting the room for this purpose, I perceived Harriet and her friend, arm in arm, taking a different path from that the company were in. A sudden fog soon made our retreat to the house prudent. On returning thither, I saw the young folks sitting on a rustic bench at a little distance from me. Fearing Harriet should take cold, I turned to the path which appeared to me to lead directly towards her; but so ingeniously was this maze contrived, that it conducted me behind the ladies, though within hearing.

" ' As I approached them, I heard miss Barnet say, ' So you really think she is good-natured?'—' Yes,' replied Harriet, ' I do indeed

indeed believe she is.'—'Ah! my dear girl,' rejoined miss Barnet, 'she may *seem* to be what you think; *these* are early days: you will soon find in her *the mother-in-law*.'—I confess, my worthy friend, that I felt my indignation rise; but a moment's reflection sufficed to check it. I advanced, rustling the branches which impeded my approach, and calling them aloud. They started with surprise, joining me in evident confusion. I remarked the change in the weather, and then instantly adverted to the ingenuity which had so happily succeeded in planting a snare for the stranger's feet. I believe my ease banished their apprehensions of having been overheard; but had I wanted a clue to the heart of this misguided girl, I should have found it in this little incident. I was sure that the innocent and unsuspecting mind of a child could not long retain the impressions of suspicious ill-will, when opposed to uniform kindness and gentleness; but I had every thing to fear from the pernicious effects of such lessons as miss Barnet's, and

became

became painfully anxious for the result of a conduct on which I had reposed as the infallible means of producing a change in this child's prejudiced mind, and on which my happiness, as much as her own, depended.

" ' The boys happily gave me no inquietude. They were inseparable; and Frank left us at the end of a month or six weeks in triumph, having accomplished his purpose with his father to place him in the same school with his brother. Tranquillity succeeded to our late dissipated life; and somewhat more at my ease in regard to Harriet, I turned my attention to the servants. I had been too much engaged to infringe on the privileges of Dawson. I had silently observed that my guests had been regaled with an abundance which would not have disgraced a lord-mayor's feast; but there were also proofs of her skill, no less undeniable. I made her my compliments on the one, and forbore to criticize the other. On her bringing me her accounts to settle, I mentioned with great caution some regulations which

which I wished to introduce: these were neither difficult nor mortifying. I spoke of her long and faithful services; of her master's sense of them; and, finally, of his intention of retrenching in some articles of expense to which he affixed neither enjoyment nor usefulness. 'To be sure, madam,' answered she with civility, 'the bills rise very high . . . but every thing is now so dear.'—'It is very true,' replied I, smiling, 'and you have given an additional reason for œconomy. But you know your master, Mrs. Dawson: his honour, his comforts, and independence will never be bartered for idle parade. I doubt not but you will readily meet his wishes—to me they are *commands:* plenty, not profusion, is his aim.' She coloured. 'I will spare you some trouble,' continued I: 'I have been in the habit of visiting my larder every morning, and my present leisure will settle me in my accustomed duty.' Dawson would not have been displeased, I believe, with an occasion more ostensible for offence; but

attachment

attachment to her master, and something like respect for me, repressed her displeasure. She soon discovered that I was not capricious or unreasonable, and for some time we governed in our respective posts very amicably.

" ' Three years after I married she quitted me, and engaged in business: on this occasion I served her, and received at her recommendation the widow of her son, who is still in my service. I allow you to smile,' continued Mrs. Davenport, ' at this enumeration of my troubles: but I assure you, even in this point, they were vexatious; my firmness relieved me, but my victory was not complete. The butler found there was no living with Mr. Davenport's *second wife*, he therefore left his place—and many dozens of empty bottles instead of full ones in the cellar. Your favourite Richard, with the title of Mr. Bingham, took his office. I am not ashamed to say that I was as much gratified as the honest man, by this proof of his master's favour; for Richard had not appeared in

in any way alarmed by Mr. Davenport's change of condition. On the approach of the Christmas vacation, I was importantly engaged one morning in trimming a straw bonnet for Harriet; the Bath fashion was to direct our taste; and Mr. Davenport was called upon to decide on the colour of the ribband. This point settled, he said to his girl, 'I dare say you will not wear this smart bonnet till your brothers arrive. They will be here to-morrow se'nnight,' added he, giving me a letter from one of them he had just received. 'We will surprise them,' continued he, 'by showing them what an excellent horse-woman you are become, Harriet. If the weather permit, we will meet them at Blandford.'—She looked delighted; but, suddenly checking her rising gaiety, sighed, 'Poor Sally Madder! how sadly will her holidays pass this Christmas!' —'Why so, my love?' asked I.—'Why,' answered she, colouring like scarlet, 'Nurse says, she is sure you will not permit her to come any more to the Hall in her vacations from

from school.'—'Nurse is mistaken,' replied I; 'nor had she any ground for such a supposition. It is time she should know me. I am incapable of depriving a mother of the innocent and laudable satisfaction of the society of a deserving child. Go, and tell her this.' I spoke with seriousness, and Harriet retired abashed.

"'On entering her apartment some time after, I found Mrs. Madder's features considerably relaxed. She thanked me with some confusion for my goodness to her daughter. 'I am sure,' cried the delighted Harriet, interrupting her, 'I am sure, mamma (we had forgotten the formal *madam*), you will like her! She is so good, and so gentle and ingenious! I will show you some of her work,' rummaging the drawers as she spoke. '*These*,' presenting some pretty articles of school-work, 'are nothing to what she does now; for she is a fine young woman at present, and her governess says she is her right hand.' A summons from the music-master stopped Harriet

riet in her eulogium of miss Madder; but the subject was too agreeable to Nurse to let it drop. She pursued it on my daughter's quitting the room. 'She is indeed, madam,' said she with honest exultation, 'an excellent young creature. She is the pride of my life.'—'And in that pride,' replied I, 'you may safely trust for an evidence that you deserve to have a good child. But,' added I, 'cannot she be settled with us before our young men come home? Can you inform her that you and Harriet will fetch her hither on Thursday in the carriage?' I had inadvertently touched the heart of Mrs. Madder, by a proposal I did not even consider as a compliment, but merely as an accommodation; but it seems that Sally had heretofore been obliged to the coachman and a pillion on these annual visits to the Hall. The fond mother, subdued by this unexpected attention to her child, bowed before my irresistible power. She burst into tears. 'You are too good, madam,' sobbed she. 'I do not deserve your kind-

ness.

ness, for I have not behaved well. I beg you will hear my excuse.

" ' I had a cruel and wicked step-mother, madam; she was the ruin of my poor industrious father. She drove my only brother from his home: he went to sea, and has never been heard of since. She beat and ill treated me; and robbed us all, to supply her own dissolute son with money, to make him still more wicked. My father died of a broken heart in a gaol. I must have starved, or done worse, had it not been for a sister of my mother. She received me, and, what was still better, as her own child. I remained with her till I married. My husband was under-tenant to my master; and we lived very near the Hall. At the death of my husband I was left with Sally, and an infant at my breast. Mrs. Davenport's health was then on the decline, and she was unable to suckle her infant, miss Harriet. I was sent for, and for some days took the charge of her and my own child. My mistress was pleased with me,

and

and prevailed upon me to place my baby at nurse, and to remain with her. The doctors assured me I was not able to rear two, and that my infant, being a very vigorous one, would do very well without the breast. My aunt recommended to me a compliance, engaging to take care of Sally. Thus, madam, I became a domestic in this family: but my poor little boy was the victim; he drooped and died; and I was very unhappy. My kind mistress consoled and comforted me, and my dear nursling throve. I know not how it was, but it seemed as if God had given me this child in the place of that which he had called to himself. Four happy years passed. My mistress placed Sally at Mrs. Craven's, and ordered that no pains should be spared in her learning; and she often said, she was providing herself with another comfort. She was indeed a benefactress to me and mine! I now dreaded the event of her approaching confinement, I saw all the hazard of it. She lived, however, some days after the birth of the child, who died

almost

almost instantly after it was born. I never quitted my dear lady's bed-side; and I saw with an aching heart her trouble respecting her children, particularly for miss Harriet. Some hours before she breathed her last, she requested of my master that I should never be removed from my attendance on her daughter. Ah! madam, had she requested harder conditions, they would have been complied with; for never did I see such grief as my poor master's.

" ' My lady provided for Sally's continuance at school, and left me a hundred pounds. I shall never forget her last look, nor her last words! They were, ' ...my Harriet...do not forsake my child!'—That I should remember these words does not surprise you, madam: but I dote upon this child, and I have always dreaded my master's marrying again, as the greatest misfortune I could meet with. My own early afflictions were constantly coming into my mind; for although my dear child had nothing to fear from poverty, I well knew she might be miserable in abundance.

I will

I will now, madam, tell you all: I verily believe I could have heard of the death of my honoured master with less grief than I did of his second marriage. Blessed be God! I see I have been wrong. My child, yes, madam, my child will be happy, and I shall die in peace.'—I was, my good friend, much affected; and with sincerity and warmth assured the good creature that I honoured her principles: and from that hour Mrs. Madder, I believe, forgot I was *a step-mother*. Her daughter fully answered Harriet's eulogium, and I soon saw that Mrs. Davenport's plans would not be abortive.

"'After the holidays we went to town, Mr. Davenport having secured a good house in Berners-street for our reception. In April he set out for Scotland, in order to settle the litigious claims of my son's unworthy uncle. You already know that he neither liked the spirit nor the activity of the agent we had chosen, and that he was glad to compromise an affair in which he knew there

there was not a shadow of justice, and in which had been involved the happiness of his brother's widow, and the provision for his child. Mr. Davenport had scarcely reached the end of his journey, before poor Harriet sickened, and a violent fever succeeded. It was pronounced contagious; for Nurse, on the ninth day, was forced from her charge by the same alarming symptoms, and obliged to retire to that bed from which she never rose more.

" ' This circumstance influenced my conduct, and Mr. Davenport was not informed of Harriet's danger until it had happily passed. I believe, however, that the fear of infection was ill-grounded; for I escaped, although I never quitted the sick-room for nearly three weeks, and no other of the family suffered except Nurse. I have always attributed the fatal consequences of her illness, to her ungoverned alarm, her excessive fatigue, and a habit of body ill suited to struggle with such a malady.

" ' My cares were happily recompensed,

and my patient in a condition to be removed. I lost not an hour in London, and had the comfort of finding the journey to the Hall less an evil than I had expected. The extreme debility of her mind and body appeared to have rendered her insensible to the loss she had sustained: she was as passive and as helpless as an infant. In proportion as she gained strength, I was not deceived in my expectations of seeing her concern manifested, and I was prepared to meet it. We were never separate, and my attentions supplied those of her faithful lost attendant. When able to move about the house, I observed that she carefully avoided her former apartment and sleeping-room; and I availed myself of this circumstance to new-model them agreeably to the designs I had before me.

"'One morning I found her very languid and dejected. I talked to her of her father's return, which we daily expected, of her rides with him, &c. &c. in order to divert her. She wept in silence. I again exerted

my

my powers. 'You will think me an ungrateful creature,' said she, 'but indeed I am only a weak child. If I could but forget poor Mrs. Madder, all would be well....But, my dear mamma, I have been very foolish. I thought I should like to see the nursery. I approached the door, but I could not open it to enter. My heart died within me, all my nurse's kindness came into my mind, and I almost thought I heard her voice, and her tender cautions. Poor woman! her love for me cost her her life.' I repressed not this effusion of grateful remembrance; but with seriousness adverted to the unfavourable state of Mrs. Madder's health, and her repugnance to air and exercise. She became more composed, but silent. At length, faintly smiling, she said, 'I shall soon have no mamma's pillow to press. If I am melancholy when my papa returns, you will take care that he is not displeased..... Mary is a very good-natured girl, and in time,' sighed she, 'I shall be accustomed to her.'—'I have no intention,' answered I, 'to

make Mary, although a good girl, your companion, either by night or by day. I have provided one whom I hope my Harriet will like better.' She looked with anxiety and curiosity in my face. 'I had purposed fetching her hither to-morrow,' pursued I, 'but I fear you will not be well enough for the ride.'—'Is it possible?' cried she with transport. 'Oh! I am sure it is Sally Madder.'

"'You are perfectly right,' resumed I: 'she is worthy of my confidence and your love. Under this roof I trust she will be happy; and that in time she will be reconciled to the loss of her good mother.'—'She will find another in you,' exclaimed the grateful girl: 'Oh! you are all goodness!.....But,' added she, sinking her voice and fixing her eyes on mine, 'can you believe that we all hated you when you first came here?'—'No,' answered I, 'I cannot; because I know to the contrary. None in this house were capable of hating an unoffending object and a stranger. Your zealous though

though humble friends taught you to believe, because they believed it themselves, that as the second choice of your father I must of course be the object of their and your abhorrence: it was the *mother-in-law*, not me, that you hated. Under that character you saw the invader of the rights of another; the interested encroacher on your father's fortune, the artful monopolizer of his affection, and the underminer of your interest and the peace of the family. In a word, you hated, and justly, this common enemy, from whose usurped authority you conceived there could be no appeal, and from whose artful blandishments there was every thing to fear. You saw me, and you saw me invested with the name you so reasonably dreaded. But you were all soon convinced that I bore no resemblance to his hideous picture; and you loved me in my real character.'

" ' You have indeed,' said she, ' changed our hearts. It is no wonder that you have subdued mine; but it is astonishing to me, that

that those mistaken people should so soon reverence you, and bless the day you came hither.'—'The secret is a very simple one, my dear child,' answered I: 'the whole is comprised in a single precept of the Gospel: 'Do unto others what you would they should do unto you;' and to this positive injunction of our divine Master was superadded at a very early age, a conviction in my own mind, that I was only happy in proportion as I contributed to the happiness of those about me.....But,' continued I, 'let not this conversation finish here. Let me enjoy a full and complete triumph over those prejudices, which have been so injudiciously, though honestly, infused into my Harriet's ingenuous mind, and which tended seriously to produce all those evils she was taught to apprehend. Let me not only speak for myself, but also in favour of many respectable women in the same predicament. You had in your infancy a good and tender mother. Her maternal cares, had it been permitted, would have safely guided you through life.

But

But have you never heard of bad mothers? I have known some negligent of their offspring, dissipators of their fortunes, indifferent and even careless of their improvement in virtue and piety; nay more, corruptors of that innocence it was their duty to guard, by the examples they placed before them. I have seen unjust, cruel, and weak mothers; some the rivals of their blooming daughters; some the selfish impediments to their sons' establishment in the world. I have seen others, led by a blind and capricious partiality, ruin the ill-fated object of their foolish and criminal preference, and, by their repulsive manners, condemn an unoffending child to dejection and continual mortification. Yet I do not hate the name of a *mother*. On the contrary, I reverence it as the most honourable designation in human life: and when I see this character supported by the performance of its duties, I regard it as the most important to the real interests of society, and the most essential to the happiness of man. Judge in future by this

this test: and wherever you find the character of the mother sustained with integrity, refuse not to acknowledge the right she has to love and esteem. But, my dear Harriet,' pursued I, 'have you ever adverted to the difficulties which meet a woman who stands in the same relation with myself? What do you imagine of the sensations which oppress the heart of a woman of honour and delicacy, on her first entrance into a family as a mother-in law?.....eyed by jealousy and suspicion; her most prudent plans undermined, and her mildest instructions branded with the reproach of severity or hypocrisy! What think you of my bridal visits? For many months after I became your father's wife, my dress was curiously and impertinently scrutinized, in order to detect some ornament which had been your mother's: you were addressed in tones of pity and tenderness by those who before this event took no interest in your welfare; your simplicity was abused, and inquiries made, [she blushed crimson deep] under the colour of commiseration,

miseration, which were much more disgraceful to those who made them than to me. Your father was felicitated with irony and rude jokes on his marriage, and your brother was asked with a sneer, how he liked his new *mamma?* with other impertinences, which his good sense and spirit rejected with scorn.

"'I sometimes, my dear girl, smiled at this poor malignity: but I assure you, had I been a few years younger, or less established in the good opinion of the virtuous and the candid, and, above all, in the heart of my husband, its influence would have been pernicious, and probably would have pervaded my happiness.' This conversation had its effect: and Harriet felt that I was indeed her mother.

"'Before we set out for Blandford to fetch miss Madder, I prevailed on Harriet to visit the deserted apartments. I had taken that opportunity to add to them a dressing-closet, and to new hang and furnish the whole. She was pleased at the change, and thought they looked cheerful. No

sooner was miss Madder arrived, than she led her up stairs, to 'show her mamma's taste.' In a few minutes she joined me in the dining-parlour, with a saddened countenance. 'I have been very indiscreet,' said she: 'I should not have conducted poor Sally into those rooms; she is weeping bitterly, and begs to be left alone.'—'You have done nothing wrong,' answered I: 'she will be more composed in a little time; and as you sleep there to-night, it is better that her first emotions should pass.'—'Does any one dine with us to-day?' asked she reassured, and observing the table laid with three covers. I answered in the negative. 'What!' said she, her eyes sparkling with joy, 'will you permit Sally Madder to dine with you?'—'Most assuredly,' replied I with seriousness. 'Do you imagine that the person to whom your father and myself have consigned your future improvement can be properly placed elsewhere? As your friend and companion, she had always a right to a place at the same table

table with yourself, and with your parents; and had not her mother had one peculiarly apart from the family, she would never have known any other in this house.

" ' But, my dear Harriet, you are now to regard miss Madder as something more than your companion: your affection, I know, cannot increase; but she is entitled to a deference, in consequence of that trust which her conduct and talents have procured her. Her claims on our kindness, high as they are, and disposed as we are to admit them, would not alone have warranted the preference we have shown; but she is good and virtuous, and will never mislead you.'

" ' The fact was, that the lady under whose care this amiable girl had been placed for the greater part of her life, perfectly understood her value; her docility and genius produced the design of qualifying her for a teacher in her school; and nothing had been omitted to render her a proper assistant. The death of her mother, and my proposals, induced Mrs. C—— to give up

up her own interest, in favour of a young person whom she loved as much as if she had been her daughter.

" ' But I have said, my dear Mr. Palmerstone, more than is necessary on this head. You have distinguished this girl's merit in the faithful and judicious cares which now engage her in this family; my daughter and miss Madder having never been separated since that day.

" ' My husband's return from Scotland, and the birth of my little Emily, completed our domestic felicity. The autumn closed upon us, and Mr. Davenport began to talk of our removal to Berners-street before the cold season should be too far advanced for the infant's safety and mine: but week succeeded week without any decided preparations, we were all happy, and reluctant to the necessary steps towards a change of our abode.

" ' In this way November had nearly closed; when one morning that a hard frost covered the ground, and a bright sun enli-

vened

vened every object, Harriet with her friend, on their return from a long walk, entered my dressing-room, where I was seated with my child on my knee. 'Oh!' cried she on entering, 'what a pity it is to give up such delicious mornings as these to that hateful London! You have no idea,' addressing me, 'of the beauty of this morning; how my brothers would enjoy such in the holidays!' Her face bore evident marks of its invigorating effects; it was glowing with health and animation. My husband, who was reading in the room, forgot his book: he gazed at her with fond delight; when, throwing aside her muff, she suddenly catched up the infant in her arms, and said, 'Plead for us, my cherub! tell this father of yours,' (carrying it towards him) 'that you will climb his knee a year the sooner for staying here; tell him that we have no frightful fevers here to kill and harass our dearest friends!' She looked at me with sensibility. 'Persuade him,' added she, smothering the babe with her caresses,

caresses, 'and I promise you a bed of roses in the summer.'—'I heartily wish,' said I, 'that she may succeed.'—My husband, steadfastly looking at me, said, 'Are you serious, Susan?'—'Most assuredly,' answered I: 'what inducements can I have to quit this scene of endeared comfort, beyond that of gratifying your inclination?'—'Well,' replied he, 'I am glad that we understand each other; for I assure you that your amusement was the sole object with me for engaging the house in town; and, to be frank, I must tell you that I detest London.' The result of this conversation was, giving up the idle burthen of a town-house; and we have not seen London since, but in passing through it.

"'The time of our young men's return now approached. They had informed us of the day of their arrival, and Harriet was busily occupied in the morning with her sister's dress. No cap would do but the one she had worked; no robe but that she had ornamented with fringe. She had scarcely finished

finished her labours, when she heard the horses enter the court. She was in an instant at the hall door, with the infant in her arms. I stood at the window, apprehensive, not of her care, but of the cold. 'See,' cried she, before they had well dismounted, 'look at her! look at little Emily!' The brothers eagerly advanced, and a friendly contest ensued who should have the first kiss Ah! my dear Palmerstone! at that moment I experienced a pleasure which recompensed me for every evil in my life!—'There,' said the lively nurse, 'take her between you,' resigning her to Frank; 'only do not devour the marmoset.' George now turned to a fine youth, who had till this instant been the unnoticed spectator of this scene. He introduced Mr. Berry to Harriet, who blushingly, but not ungracefully, led the way to the drawing-room, where I met them, and recovered my treasure. The stranger enlivened our society; our balls were brilliant; and miss Barnet had many occasions of seeing the *mother-in-law* the promoter

promoter and sharer of the happiness of her family.

" ' Six happy years flew on downy wings over our heads. Harriet became the wife of Mr. Berry, and our hearts exulted in the prospect of the happiness of our condition. I fear we were too secure; we forgot that misfortune could break down our fences. I lost my sweet child the year after Harriet married. My health was unequal to the shock; a nervous fever succeeded, which for many months obstinately rejected every means of relief. To you, my excellent friend, who so nobly exhibit the goodness of that nature which *all* have derived from the pure source of their existence, it will be no matter of surprise to hear that I was indebted to the grateful cares of my old housekeeper Dawson, for attentions which in no small degree contributed to my recovery. This worthy woman left her own comfortable ease, and the care of her own concerns, on the first intelligence of my illness, to watch with unremitting patience

by

by my bed-side, and to console my weakened mind by her soothings. Had I stood in need of inducements for the observance of one of the most binding of the relative duties, (for such I will venture to call kindness and consideration to domestics,) I must in this instance have met with them: but to such as do forget these claims I will say, 'Render your servants happy, respect their ease and their health, consult their interest and security: if they be ungrateful, you are unfortunate, and may be allowed to complain.' But I forget myself: and my story should finish. My sons are now in Scotland, at George's paternal house, for which he is probably as much indebted to Mr. Davenport as to his own father. These young men are connected by ties which they take not the trouble to define, their hearts have long since established them as common blessings to each other. One interest unites them. Their social pleasures are incomplete when divided. Their characters are different: but this difference forms another bond

bond of union: the mild and serious disposition of George is happily blended with the brave and careless gaiety of Frank, who calls, not without reason, his friend the 'sage Mentor.'

"'You see my daughter. She is the well-earned praise of my life. You see my grand-children fondly soliciting my love and notice. You see your worthy friend Davenport treading the down-hill of life with honour and peace; and you see in me an example that the upright of heart, even in this world, are blessed. My son Berry is all that a husband and a father can and ought to be. He and his wife are equally fond of the country. My son farms a considerable portion of the estate on which he resides. You have, with apparent satisfaction, followed him in his improvements and amusements. You have seen him dispensing happiness and abundance around him; and I believe you never partook of a rural feast with more gaiety than at the cream-house, as the children call the neat habitation

tion of Richard Bingham and his comely wife Mary. Harriet, when she married, remembered that this honest fellow had been a very warm defender of the '*mother-in-law*,' at the time 'every one else hated her.' And this circumstance gave him an interest in her grateful mind. Mr. Berry entered into her views...when does he not? and soon after he appointed him to the office of land-bailiff, and with a small farm placed him at his ease, where you saw him. Richard affords me another example in favour of my opinion respecting servants; for nothing can go beyond this good creature's attachment to me and my children. Thus you have before you my little history. You will, I doubt not,' added Mrs. Davenport, smiling, 'make it useful: but I know not what figure it would make in the annals of fashion; for I quitted *the world*, as it is called, at a very early period of my life. I was however long enough in it to see that the essential duties of our condition were little understood or attended to. The result

of

of these my observations is to be found in the education I adopted for my daughter, and in which she happily met my views. To shine, she must be seen in the bosom of her family: in order to excite admiration and attract praise, she must be followed in her plans of prudence and good sense; and to be justly appreciated, she must be viewed as the *mother* of a family.'"

I will venture to predict what will be the result of Mrs. Davenport's narrative on my Eliza's mind. I believe your own observations of this amiable woman would have effectually counteracted the prejudices you had unwittingly entertained for a condition in life she has so nobly supported. I cannot suppress one circumstance which her modesty passed over, namely, that to her wise œconomy it is principally owing that Mr. Davenport is not at this day an embarrassed man. His easy good nature, and habitual neglect of his affairs, had insensibly produced difficulties in his pecuniary concerns at the time he married; and from

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those not being pressing, there is every reason to believe they would have become serious, simply because they were neither formidable nor provided for by œconomy.

I think I cannot have a better occasion than the present, of warning you against the weakness of yielding up your own judgement to the direction of those in whose wisdom you can have no experience. Young people are peculiarly exposed to the evils of this sort of credulity; and their common tenaciousness in respect to their hastily adopted opinions, renders these evils of the most serious concern, and gives to their future characters in life a colouring which nature never intended, and which reason will condemn.

I remain affectionately your

ANGELICA PALMERSTONE.

Letter IX.

THE WEST-INDIANS.

I have remarked with great satisfaction, my Eliza, that you entertain a very high opinion of our late guest, Mrs. Warren: in so doing you show your quickness and discrimination in appreciating worth. On all occasions in which you speak of this lady, and these are frequent, you express your astonishment at finding so many and such varied talents improved to such a degree of perfection in the same person, and possessed by one not yet more than thirty. You have spoken more than once of your surprise at her reading in English to your grandfather some passages from the Cyrus of Metastasio, when you accidentally discovered that she had only the Italian edition of his works in her hand. You have repeated the question of monsieur l'abbé Ferval,

Ferval, who, after conversing with her some time in French, asked her whether she had been educated in Paris. Her musical talents and her drawing have also excited your admiration, and your *emulation*; for you have profited considerably from her instructions. Did your praises of this lady stop at these attainments solely, I should subscribe to your taste, but I should not respect your understanding: but when you expatiate on her simplicity of manners, the sweetness of her temper, and the charms of her conversation, I congratulate myself on possessing a daughter who is able to distinguish the solid as well as to admire the brilliant.

Mrs. Warren is indeed, my Eliza, a very extraordinary woman. Her mind is stored with principles which render her an honour to her sex, and the delight of her friends. She is the ornament of the society she frequents, and confers upon it a distinction which they are proud to acknowledge. What will you say when I tell you, that to

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the languages of which you know her to be so perfectly a mistress, she joins a knowledge of the Latin tongue which would not disgrace the most literary man? Your grandfather, who is eminently a classical scholar, assures me that she read to him the most difficult authors in that language with ease and elegance, and entered into their subjects with critical taste and judgement. She rarely displays this talent, because she wishes to avoid a competition not unfrequently censured as a vain parade, and to which is affixed, not over liberally, the stigma of female pedantry and affectation.

This forbearance is not, however, either the result of fear, or respect for such common-place sarcasms; but simply because she is more emulous of exhibiting the graces of a life of purity and genuine modesty, than those of an accomplished and cultivated mind; and a cordial and frank reception in the world has more charms for her, than the reputation which would place her at a distance from those who now love her.

After

After this imperfect sketch of this amiable woman, neither you, my Eliza, nor any one not in her most intimate confidence, could easily credit, that in her youth, all the natural endowments of her mind, and all the excellencies of her heart, were kept inactive by *indolence*. Habitual sloth sunk the former into ingenuity in regard to childish amusements, and the latter into apathy; or rendered them accessible only to the debasing and corrupting influence of *idleness*.

You are not disposed to question your mother's veracity. I will therefore proceed to give you Mrs. Warren's history, as nearly in her own words as possible.

We first became intimate at Bath, where the gentlemen of the faculty had recommended to your grandfather a trial of the water during the summer; and in consequence of that advice we remained sixteen months there.

On my arrival I frequently met Mrs. Warren at the house of a common friend,

who did not any more than ourselves enter into the amusements of the place. Mrs. Warren was then in her weeds, and not more than five- or six-and-twenty. You will not wonder that this circumstance had its interest with me; but independently of it I saw her with increasing esteem. She was a resident of Bath, but had for the summer season a house at so short a distance from the town as to admit of its being a walk to the robust. She pressed me with cordiality to share her cottage, as she styled her neat and pretty habitation; and your grandfather and myself often availed ourselves of her hospitality, to escape from the suffocating heat of Bath in sultry weather. The autumn settled us all in Alfred-street; and our intercourse was now ripened into old and accustomed friendship.

One morning I received a note from her: it was hastily written, and contained words to this effect: "Come directly. You must dine with me. My happiness is incomplete till

till you share it with me." My curiosity was excited, and I obeyed her summons with all possible dispatch.

On entering the drawing-room I found a lady with her. Mrs. Warren had evidently been weeping: she advanced to meet me with emotion: "Now," added she, "I have all my treasure before me! for lady G—— and Mrs. Palmerstone are my guests;" and reassuming her natural gaiety, she added, "I have taken good care that no one shall intrude on this happy hour." An introduction thus affectionate banished reserve, and even the common observances of ceremony. Mrs. Warren was an acknowledged tie that united us, and we forgot in half an hour that we had never met before. I found that this lady's visit to Bath was unexpected, and that Mrs. Warren had been surprised at seeing her; but the satisfaction arising from the interview dissipated in a little time those emotions which had saddened their first moments of meeting. We conversed with the ease of old friends: and I was sorry when I un-

 derstood

derstood that lady G—— was obliged to quit us immediately after tea. She had no sooner left us than my friend, drawing the working-table forward, and putting my work-bag upon it, said with a smile, "Perhaps you do not know that you are my prisoner for to-night? Mr. Palmerstone is at Bristol: I have therefore no one to dispute my claims. Your woman has received my orders, as your work-bag witnesses. Be docile, therefore, and let me see you employed; for then I shall be sure of you. I have a great deal to say to you of the invaluable friend who has just left us." I answered with a complying bow, and she took up her knotting, and began:

"You know that I was born in Jamaica; and that I possess in that island a considerable estate, once the property of my parents. My mother died when I was only six months old. I was nursed and reared by a white woman, the wife of one of the overseers of the plantation on which we resided. This woman had been my mother's housekeeper,

and

and she continued to superintend the domestic affairs of the family with fidelity after her decease. Her tender care in regard to me, well merited the confidence which my father reposed in her; for she was without reproach, unless her excessive indulgence to her charge be construed into one by that candour which considers the motives that governed her; for she thought it an imputation on her affection and respect for my mother, when a tear fell from my eyes.

"My good father had not altogether the same apology for the same weakness in regard to his child: for he was a man of sense; yet he treated me with a fondness as pernicious as that of my faithful nurse. At ten years of age it is probable he discovered something of this truth; and in spite of nurse's tears, and his own reluctant heart, he consigned me to the care of his friends Mr. and Mrs. Delmy, in order that I might receive that education in London which he despaired of obtaining for me under his own eye. A lady long known to him facilitated

facilitated his project. She kindly added me to her young family during the passage: this was a prosperous one; and she placed me in the hands of Mrs Delmy, who received me as a peculiar blessing sent from heaven.

"Mr. Delmy had been my mother's guardian: her youth had been passed in his hospitable house, and she quitted it on becoming the wife of my father. The most perfect confidence subsisted between the young couple and their absent friends: this had been strengthened by the commercial engagements between Mr. Delmy and my father; and Mr. Delmy, with an integrity which reflects a lustre on all his other excellent qualities, enriched himself by his attention to the interest of his friend. You may judge of my reception. Month succeeded month, in inquiries after a proper school for me, in which constantly prevailed the wish of finding one that would impose no restraint on their idol.

"This interval of time was devoted to

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my pleasure, which solely occupied their benevolent hearts. At length they heard of a situation which lessened their reluctance to parting with me. Mrs. Needham's attention and tenderness to her pupils being as fully established as the reputation of her talents and good sense, I was accordingly placed in her hands, with as many cautions as the fond anxiety of Mrs. Delmy could suggest.

"I had never been accustomed to contradiction..... My diet had been carefully attended to..... No expense would be regarded, in which my comforts and gratifications were included..... No attentions unnoticed. Mrs. Needham, with the utmost good humour, engaged for all that was demanded consistently with the rules of her house, and the duty she imposed on herself to attend to the health and happiness of the young people under her care, as sedulously as to their improvement; and with great tenderness satisfied Mrs. Delmy that she had nothing to fear for me. This truly respectable woman did not deceive her. My friends left

left me with a cargo of cakes and trinkets, and as much money in my purse as it pleased me to take from theirs.

"The assistant ladies, by Mrs. Needham's direction I presume, left me two or three days to myself, in order, I suppose, that I might be reconciled to my new situation, and become acquainted with my companions. I was perfectly satisfied with the one and the other. The profuseness, or, if you will, the generosity of my temper soon gained me an interest with the girls; for I distributed, as I received, without discretion; and being, as I really was, good-humoured, the teachers treated me with smiles and affability. I was conducted with much consideration to the business of the school, and masters in their different branches engaged to admit me as a pupil; but a very few weeks sufficed to convince those charged with my instruction, that they were employing their time fruitlessly. A supine carelessness baffled all their honest endeavours, and defeated every attempt towards my reformation.

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Good-humoured and gay, I was content with all around me whilst left to the enjoyment of myself. A slattern in my appearance, notwithstanding all the attention that was given to me; perfectly indifferent to the expensive distinctions Mrs. Delmy's fondness contrived to give to my dress; I only regretted the labour annexed to every additional ribband. I never shall forget the sufferings I endured, on first being in this house, and condemned to put on my own shoes and stockings You may laugh if you please.... but I do assure you, that, could I have effected my purpose, I should have slept in them. I regarded the time allotted me for getting my lessons as destined for my repose, and every exhortation to diligence as containing nothing more serious, than as it obliged me to stand on my legs. I was a clumsy girl, although tall for my age; inert in all my movements, and inexpressibly fatigued by the most moderate exercise. The forbearance of the teachers and masters was exhausted ... it is probable

they had no authority to compel me to diligence by severe means, at least none were used...they became careless of a pupil from whom nothing was to be expected. I underwent without sullenness the ordinary penalties annexed to idleness, and which commonly produced their intended effects on the other girls. But in solitude I slept. Had I a companion in my disgrace, I converted it into mirth and enjoyment. Lounging on a form, or squatted on my knees, I was the life and spirit of the little circle; and often have I triumphed in drawing reluctant smiles from the grave masters and teachers.

"In this way passed the first six months of my noviciate—I believe I may say, beloved by all, and despised by all, however paradoxical it may sound. The vacation returned me to my friends the Delmys, where I was only questioned relatively to my comforts and indulgences. As I had no complaints to make, and had, in the full enjoyment of my ease, forgotten every former invasion of it, I spoke with pleasure of my governess

governess and her family. Mrs. Delmy was delighted and grateful. On my return to school, the carriage was furnished with elegant little presents for the *good ladies* who superintended in Mrs. Needham's house; and even the assistant cook had reason to remember the *West India young lady.*

"Upon distributing my gifts, on the day following my arrival, I found that one of the teachers had given place to a new one. She was a very elegant young woman, with whose person and manners I was immediately struck. I offered her, with my usual eagerness, the present which had been destined for her predecessor. She declined it with sweetness and politeness, telling me, 'Mrs. Needham could with ease convey it to the lady for whom it had been intended; and such a remembrance from you now,' added she, 'will be doubly grateful.' I felt she was right, and loved her for a generosity, which somehow had appeared to me less general than I had been accustomed to think it. I soon discovered that I was in a particular manner

manner under this lady's inspection. I also remarked, with my usual nonchalance, that my masters had discontinued their lessons. Day succeeded day, and I was left to my own pleasure. If I worked at my frame, it was well; if I netted, it was the same. No privations, no lectures followed. No one disturbed my repose; and although the slave of sloth, I began to be weary of an idleness which admitted of no variety. I asked miss Courtney, the new teacher, why she omitted me in her assignment of tasks to the young ladies? 'It is,' replied she with a serious air, 'because we presume that you are not sent hither in order to be instructed.'—'Why,' answered I, 'for what other purpose do you imagine that I am here?'—'To eat, and to drink, and to sleep,' returned she. An acute sensation of shame passed my mind. I endeavoured to conceal it, and, with assumed gaiety, exclaimed, 'What can be more pleasant?'—'True,' answered she: 'to hunger and labour they are indeed gratifications; but methinks that, in order for your enjoyment

ment of these blessings of nature, there was no necessity for your crossing the Atlantic.' —I was hastening from her to hide a vexation, which in spite of me rose to my eyes; when she said mildly, 'The young ladies are all engaged: you will only interrupt them: do me the favour to stay with me. Mrs. Needham has kindly given me this morning for the purpose of arranging my books and clothes. If I dared, I would request your assistance: all these trunks must be emptied before I shall feel myself at home.'—'Oh!' cried I, joyfully squatting down by the side of one of them, 'I will help you with the greatest pleasure.'—'Here are some new shelves,' observed miss Courtney: 'I doubt not I owe them to Mrs. Needham's attention. You shall take out the books, and I will place them.'—This was an employment quite in my way. I drew without exertion the books from the box, and placed them on the floor around me. The two-fold duty of miss Courtney, to pick them up and place them properly, cost her more

more time and labour: whilst I, sitting at my ease, examined the lettered volumes about me. Mrs. Chapone's works, elegantly bound, attracted my curiosity . . . on the blank page was beautifully written, 'Prize Book, Miss Courtney.' . . . A neat rose-wood drawing-stand, a box of Reeves's colours, a set of historical medals, and several other books in French and Italian, passed my hand with the same designation.

"'Had you a yearly lottery at your school?' demanded I.—'No,' answered she, 'nothing was allowed *there* to *chance:* application and industry were the only means of profit permitted by the lady who presided in it: these she encouraged by donations which were distributed every six months; a fund being established by the parents of the young ladies for the purpose, and to which she liberally subscribed. I have often reflected on that wisdom and address with which she excited emulation and restrained envy, by an impartiality so measured as to leave no room for discontent:

nor

nor can I forget the value she set on *good nature*, for which the first prize was always destined, and the candidate judged by her companions. These little evidences of my industry,' continued she, sitting down and turning one in her hand, 'are now my treasure. They serve me as powerful stimulatives to those exertions and that activity they once rewarded. You can hardly imagine how much they have contributed to produce in my mind those habits of patience and perseverance, without which it is impossible to attain to any thing valuable. To say the truth, they have done more: for they have introduced such a love of employment, that with me time unoccupied is burthensome; and I should prefer the rudest labour to idleness.'

"I saw her design, and I also felt it. 'I doubt not,' said I sorrowfully, 'the truth of what you say; but I dare say that you had a good mother to instruct you before you went to school. I had none to guide me.'—She turned pale.—'I also lost mine,' replied she sighing,

sighing, 'at a very early age; but that loss made me acquainted with a friend not less valuable . . . But we are becoming grave,' said she, rising, 'and you will be weary. I can with ease finish the rest by leaving my bed an hour earlier than ordinary to-morrow morning.' She now displayed to me her drawings, and a portfolio of botanical plants beautifully preserved and arranged, and with the most sweet and fascinating manners engaged my attention and admiration. The first dinner-bell surprised us. 'Is it possible?' cried I. 'It cannot be so late!'—'Oh, yes,' replied miss Courtney, 'it certainly is: I ask myself the same question very often. Employment gives wings to time,' added she, affectionately pressing my hand, 'but in its rapid flight it leaves memorials not less honourable than salutary.'—On quitting her for my hasty toilet, I asked her 'whether I might come to help her in the morning.' She laughed, 'You!' said she with an ironical tone: 'why, I shall rise at six o'clock! Do you consider such conditions as these?

these?'—'Yes,' answered I piqued, 'and why should I not be able to rise at the same hour?'—'Nay,' replied she in the same gay tone, 'now indeed you puzzle me. Shall we put it to the test?...I shall be obliged to you for your company.'

"On retiring to bed, I recollected that a watch was something more than a trinket. Mrs. Delmy had intrusted to my keeping a very fine repeater of my mother's, which with the rest of her ornaments had been sent to England with me. It had been the plaything of the day, and soon forgotten. A search for it was necessary, and I began it with an interest and a diligence quite new to me. At the bottom of a trunk, amongst shoes and caps, cakes and books, I found the watch: but the spring was broken, and it was useless.

"I had now no other means to apply to than the house-clock. There was no danger of my not hearing it strike, yet I was uneasy and restless: all the latent powers of my mind seemed roused; and the reflection that I should

I should not long be miss Courtney's favourite was actually oppressive to me. Something very much like self-condemnation haunted my spirits: I calculated again and again my acquirements, with those it was probable miss Courtney possessed at my age, and I experienced a shame and regret, into which glided a sentiment altogether unknown to me before; that is to say, the disappointed expectations of my father. I shed, my dear Mrs. Palmerstone, tears of real contrition. The result of my cogitations was a resolution to imitate miss Courtney with all possible diligence. My watchfulness preceded the time, and, mistaking the hour, I rose at five o'clock. Impenetrable darkness surrounded me: but no ways dismayed by a situation so new to me, I took my bundle of clothes, which I had used the precaution to collect together, and stepped across the passage that led to miss Courtney's room. She was asleep when I entered the apartment, and I believe she would not have been sorry had I been so likewise.

likewise. It was dreadfully cold, and her first care was to recommend to me dispatch in dressing: she then with much cheerfulness congratulated me on my victory, and instantly arose. The fire was replenished, and the lamp gave place to two candles; all took an air of comfort; but I thought her immeasurably long in her dressing and attendant duties.

"To say the truth, these included attentions which I seldom thought of when left to myself. At last miss Courtney placed herself by me with all the graces of neatness and simplicity. We proceeded to our business, and I was disposed to be very alert: but my curiosity was so often in action, that I believe I was a more importunate questioner than useful assistant. Sometimes artificial flowers came in the way...then a set of dressing-boxes in filigree....now a worked gown, and now miniatures of ladies. These I examined with attention, and asked her 'whether the friend she had mentioned was amongst them? though,' added I, 'they all

appear

appear too young, except this,' directing her eyes to one I held in my hand. 'That,' replied she, 'is the picture of my good governess. But you say truly: the friend I alluded to has lineaments very different from any you see at present; she has neither the smiles and graces of youth, nor the sobered sweetness of maturity. You will find them, however, pretty faithfully delineated in this packet,' giving me one sealed up: 'put it in your pocket for the present, we have no time to spare.' I obeyed, and took up several bundles neatly tied up and ticketed. One was muslin....'a frock for Emily' another, 'dimity for Charles'.....each bore their several destinations. 'You have then,' said I, 'brothers and sisters? You are more fortunate than I am.'—'Those,' replied she 'whom affection has bestowed upon me, and allows me to consider as such; but nature has denied me that blessing. The trifles you see are intended for the use of a friend in the country: she has a young family, and accepts with kindness the offer-

ings

ings of gratitude: her ingenuity and industry give a value to these half-worn clothes, which spare her husband expenses that would otherwise press on his limited income.'—'I wish,' cried I, 'she had some of my things! Do, my dear miss Courtney, manage to put in some of my frocks—Mrs. Delmy will be so pleased!'—'Oh!' said she involuntarily, 'that I may but succeed!'—'Do not doubt it,' cried I gaily, misconceiving her meaning. 'Mrs. Delmy will send you plenty of things!' She kissed me with tenderness, and an emotion that I ascribed solely to pleasure: my contentment was complete, and my vivacity unrestrained.

"On our leaving the room, she said to me with a significant smile, 'My dear miss Wentworth, as you are not *always* employed, it may be you will not be displeased to visit this apartment sometimes: when I am in it, you will always be a welcome guest; and in my absence,' added she, looking at her book-case, 'my friends will be yours.'

yours.' I thanked her with real gratitude, and the same day availed myself of this permission, in order to examine at my ease the important packet, which I conceived contained some very interesting secret.

"On entering the room I was struck by the neat arrangement of it, which a cheerful fire no ways disgraced. Some beautiful landscapes were hung round it.... in the middle of the room stood a table and reading-desk, inimitably executed, so as to resemble the finest marble.... and near the fire a frame of embroidery, which miss Courtney had just left: in a word, I conceived I was in the temple of Taste; a view of my own negligent person, reflected from the opposite mirror, convinced me that I was an unfit inhabitant of it; and for the first time in my life I tried to settle my hair into some order. I now with much circumspection broke the seal of my packet.

"Your perusal of it will spare me the further recital of my girlish and heedless days. 'Take it,' said she, presenting it to me: 'it

'it will effectually prepare your heart for its reception of lady G——.' With my friend's permission I copied the following letter, which I now transcribe for your use, and in order to connect the whole of Mrs. Warren's narrative.

"MY DEAR MISS WENTWORTH,

"You will perhaps find some difficulty in conceiving that a similarity of condition has ever subsisted between yourself and me, opposed, as it is at present, by my situation in life; for it is only from our own experience that we are effectually taught to admit the full conviction of the instability of human prosperity. Yet I, like yourself, was the only daughter of a rich West-India planter: I, like yourself, was the fond hope of my parents: I was yet more favoured by Providence than yourself; for I had a mother's love, a mother's fostering care. Like yourself, I was sent to this country for the purpose of instruction; my mother's modest

dest worth yielding to the wishes of my father, who judged his child entitled to the most elaborate education. Like you, under the protection of friends did I reach London; and, like you, was I consigned into the hands of those who my fond parents believed would supply to me their watchful tenderness. Here all similarity between us ends. I found no Mr. and Mrs. Delmy's cordial looks and kind greetings; I was conveyed from the ship to a large and comfortless house, by the friends who had taken charge of me on the voyage, and who very exactly calculated that this care finished the moment we set our feet on shore.

"A plain sturdy-looking man received me in what I found was his accompting-room. Several men were at their desks, and he instantly dispatched one of them to see after 'miss's luggage.' His words to me were few, but civil: he said he would conduct me to his wife, who would be very glad to see me, and would take care of me. This wife I found

found dressing in an apartment which appeared to me suffocating and gloomy, although very fine. My introduction was brief; for he said 'Here is miss Courtney safe and sound,' and immediately disappeared. The lady of the mansion asked me a few questions relative to my voyage, but I could only answer by monosyllables. My spirits were depressed, and my situation did not encourage me: it was apparent I was in her way; and after a pause of some moments she said, 'Perhaps, miss Courtney, you will be amused with my young folks. I will conduct you to them.' She led the way, and I followed to the attic story. In a large nursery were two boys and two girls: the oldest of them appeared to be eight or nine years of age; I was twelve, and had long ceased to consider myself as a suitable companion for infants. Mrs. Brown thought otherwise, and I became from that hour the daily inhabitant of the nursery, till I was placed in a school. My rude and noisy associates were little calculated to reconcile me to my prison, or to

banish those regrets that pressed on my heart at the recollection of my parents, and of the paradise I had quitted. Mrs. Brown's consolations on seeing, as she might have done very frequently, my eyes red with weeping, were not of the most soothing kind; for they commonly finished by asking me, 'what I was to do at school, if I could not make myself easy with her.'

"The time for this experiment was now fixed; and notwithstanding the implied discouragement contained in Mrs. Brown's interrogation, I rejoiced at the prospect of a change in my situation. I saw with curiosity and surprise the preparations which were made for my appearance at school; and my introduction into one of the first seminaries in town appeared to me no less extraordinary; for Mrs. Brown announced me as 'a young lady of *immense fortune*, to whom every consideration was due....the child of Mr. Brown's most intimate friend....and one whom they both esteemed very highly.' The lady to whom she addressed her discourse

course of my riches and importance, appeared however very much at her ease, and contented herself with saying 'she hoped we should be satisfied with each other.' Indeed her house and family were well calculated to make me forget the attic story on Dowgate-Hill. The comforts with which the former abounded, and the unaffected kindness and politeness of the latter, soon restored me to my native gaiety. I only wanted news from Jamaica to complete my happiness. The packet was hourly expected. It arrived. You will easily recall to your memory those dreadful hurricanes and tremendous thunder-storms which so frequently appal the firmest minds during the heat of our summers: but few indeed have been the examples of an overwhelming destruction like that which in the space of a few hours swept with unpitying fury over my dearest hopes. Parents, domestics, the very earth on which my infant feet first trod, all were buried in one sad desolation. The habitation of peace, and the residence of the mild

virtues of benevolence and humanity, served them for a grave. The smiling face of nature around suddenly changed, and horror reigned with all the signs of woe and ruin. Judge, my dear miss Wentworth, by this catastrophe, of the terrific aspect which *adversity* can assume, under the all-controlling power of the great and almighty Arbiter of events.

" I was too young to meet her awful form with those arms which religion furnishes; I was also happily too young to feel the full force of her chastening hand. My grief was the sorrow of a child, and I sunk into a bed of sickness, and a temporary forgetfulness of the cause which had conducted me to it. My life was despaired of for some days: but I gradually recovered to symptoms of as alarming a kind; for the physicians pronounced me in a consumption. I was now removed from the tender care of my governess, who, for reasons long since apparent to me, had charged herself with the care of me during my violent illness, and had under

der various pretences prevented my removal to Dowgate-Hill, until she learned that I was to accompany Mrs. Brown and her young family into Hampshire, where they usually resided in the summer. She then yielded to an authority which she had no right to dispute, and I quitted her with a reluctance no ways favourable to my dejected mind.

" I had wept solely for the loss of my parents. The change in my condition had been communicated to me by Mrs.——, with a tenderness that rendered it an evil so light, compared with the object of my sad regrets, that I scarcely thought it one: yet, inexperienced and unprepared as I was, I felt the difference between the impoverished orphan and the *great fortune miss Courtney*.

" Mrs. Brown talked of my misfortune with a full conviction on her mind, that the lesson it inculcated could not be too often repeated; and she usually finished her recital with lamentations, which had for their object the considerable loss Mr. Brown would sustain by

by the death of my father. Sometimes the compassion my tears excited would reach her, and she redoubled them by her consolations, which chilled my heart and deprived me of hope. My refuge was the nursery and the garden: the boys were fortunately absent, and my youth conquered the remains of my illness. With renewed strength I regained my spirits, to at least a degree of composure which rendered me less burthensome to others; and Mrs. Brown was tired of a tale which her visitors had all heard, and in which, I believe, they all sympathized more than herself.

"The usual time of the vacation had now elapsed some weeks, and I heard nothing of my return to my school, and to a friend whom I revered and loved. Rendered timid by Mrs. Brown's indifference, I did not dare to inquire into a matter so much the object of my solicitude. I knew the school was an expensive one, and I knew also that I was become poor. The explanation however came at length in Mrs. Brown's

Brown's way. She informed me that her husband was coming down, and that then I should be disposed of suitably to my unfortunate change of circumstances: 'For,' added she, 'you must be sensible that the school you have quitted will not do *now*: a different education must *now* be adopted.' I made no reply: my spirits rose at the prospect of leaving a family in which I clearly perceived my poverty was more considered than my comfort.

"Shortly after Mr. Brown's arrival we set out for the destined school. On our little journey, my conductor talked to me with kindness, said 'I should want nothing...that *the gentlewoman* with whom I was going to live was as worthy a lady as any in the county, and would, he was certain, treat me with great kindness.'

"The reception I met with from my new governess was an additional evidence of Mr. Brown's care of my interest, and he left me contented and grateful. The house and gardens were handsome and spacious; good

assistant

assistant masters regularly attended the school, which was numerous, and composed of the daughters of the neighbouring gentry. I was highly gratified by finding myself included in all the lessons of the masters; and judging this a favour I owed to the generosity of Mr. Brown, I assiduously studied to profit from it by an application which would best mark my gratitude. During a year I was under this persuasion, and diligently improved every hour I could spare, in French and drawing; whilst, from my natural taste for music, I made such a proficiency in it as flattered my instructor.

"The ensuing summer I was again the guest of Mrs. Brown for the holidays. She was, or affected to be, surprised at my attainments, which had been called out by some company she had in the house. She learned that I had received lessons which, with a face glowing with anger, she told me were quite useless to me, and that Mr. Brown had imposed upon her, for no such *needless* charges were included in my year's bill

bill of expense, although it was heavy enough. Mr. Brown, I imagine, satisfied his lady; but it remained an ænigma to me, which Mrs. Ward only could unravel. She had, from the first hour I entered her house, shown me a marked protection, which could only be accounted for from the general and leading traits of her character. An ardent good will and the most active benevolence directed all her actions. Prompt to assist, she proportioned her services rather to the wants of others than her own means, which, though not scanty, were yet not abundant. I was unfortunate, I was young, helpless, and innocent; and no condition of prosperity could have given me such powerful claims on her heart; and from this generous compassion sprang the tenderness of a mother, and the zeal and activity of the most upright guardian.

"Four happy years was I sheltered under her maternal roof, unnoticed by Mrs. Brown, although within twenty miles of her. Her husband occasionally called in his way to

and from London, and, as I concluded, settled for my maintenance with Mrs. Ward, to whose discretion I was apparently consigned. In one of these visits he gave me to understand that I was expected to pass the ensuing vacation at his house, and desired me to be prepared for his calling to take me thither. I felt that this invitation included in it more privations, not to say mortifications, than even gratitude could reconcile me to; and I ventured to say something respecting engagements which Mrs. Ward had permitted me to make, with several of the young ladies who lived very near us. But no appeal was regarded: and he talked of the pleasure I should have in running about the garden with his children, as if I had but just then quitted my leading strings.

"Mrs. Brown, on seeing me as tall as I now am, thought me, I presume, rather too old for a constant inmate of the nursery; but she did me ample justice in conceiving that I might be useful to the regulation of it. The boys had been emancipated from it; they

they had been placed in a country school near their grandfather, with whom they passed their vacations: the two girls were yet taught to regard it as a favour to quit it for their mother's society. They were fine children, but neglected; and Mrs. Brown, with something between a compliment and a command, desired me to teach them the use of their needle, and to read. 'You will find amusement, I hope,' added she, 'in this application of your leisure time during my absence.' At dinner this unlooked-for absence was explained to the new curate and his wife, who had the honour of being her guests. I was introduced to these worthy people as her 'dear miss Courtney,' who had the goodness to supply to her little girls 'her care and tenderness' during her excursion to Lyme, where she was going to bathe; and 'with such a substitute she could frame no excuse for refusing this attention to her health.' I was silent, till Mr. and Mrs. Wilson with frankness and politeness offered me every amusement in their power during the

the absence of my friend: they finished by observing, that the young ladies might not be displeased at finding society of their own age to welcome them.

" Mrs. Brown's departure was a matter of no regret to me. I was mistress of my time; my pupils, who began to be attached to me, were not indocile, and the parsonage became our daily resort. This was a very handsome house, which the rector included, in default of another, in the salary he annexed to doing duty in two parishes, with the condition of keeping in good order a large and not inelegant garden. This stipulation of the careful rector was totally useless; for Mr. Wilson made it his recreation and delight.

" The family consisted of two boys and two girls; and the ingenuity and activity of the mother gave an appearance of order and neatness to the children and to the house, which perfectly corresponded with Mr. Wilson's care and exactness out of it. Our intimacy produced ease and confidence, and I

soon

soon discovered that their income required the œconomy which was so wisely and unremittingly attended to. Mrs. Wilson made all her children's clothes, and her industry quickened mine. I assisted her in her needlework, and in return she taught me the most necessary use of the needle. Our united labours had been profitable to the girls, who exhibited at church *new frocks* made of half-worn meterials, and *new bonnets* which had passed under a summer's sun. It may be that my taste had given an air of smartness to these articles of dress, which Mrs. Wilson, remote as she was from fashion, would not have so well succeeded in. It so happened, however, that Mrs. Brown on her return home discovered this talent in me; and she profited so assiduously from it that I had scarcely time to eat or to sleep. Mrs. Ward began at length to be impatient for my return: several weeks had elapsed since the school commenced, 'and she longed to embrace her dear child.' I expressed as much of this as I had courage to do to Mrs Brown.

Brown, who coldly replied, 'she believed her husband had no intention that I should return to S——. You are now old enough,' added she, 'to be useful to others. You do not expect to pass your life in a school.' The following week fully explained Mr. Brown's views relative to me. He informed me 'that he and his family were on the point of sailing for Jamaica, where he intended in future to reside; and that, with Mrs. Brown's consent, he meant to take me with them as governess to his girls.' My heart sunk within me at this proposal. He perceived my emotion, and talked of my getting a rich husband, and recovering something from the plantation, 'which,' added he, 'is now only waste ground.' I burst into tears. . . .'Well, well,' cried he: 'you will consider of my offer, and I am certain you will see all the kindness of it.' I wrote instantly to Mrs. Ward, and then consulted my oracle, Mr. Wilson. To my inexpressible comfort, I was warmly counselled to refuse with steadiness the proposed plan; and Mrs.

Ward

Ward charged me, on the duty of a child, to return to her, and leave every care behind me.

" I lost no time in signifying my resolution to Mrs. Brown, who received my refusal with much anger. Her husband, not dissatisfied with the arguments I used, although much so with my rejection of his offer, said, with an air which indicated more of concern than resentment, ' If this be your determination, I must yield. I have no legal authority to compel you to go. I must however place before you your resources in a world which you are so foolish as to encounter unprotected. Your father remitted with you a thousand pounds, in order to answer the expenses of your education; and at the same time signified his orders that it should be placed in the hands of Mr. D—— the banker for your use. This was done. On hearing of the melancholy disaster which so soon followed, Mr. D—— proposed buying stock in your name with the residue of the sum in his hands. This likewise has been

been done. He has all the necessary documents, and he will remit you the interest of seven hundred pounds. Your first establishment at school being fortunately defrayed by money in my hands, nothing of that in Mr. D——'s was expended beyond the charges occasioned by your illness, and your subsequent demands.' I thanked him with real gratitude, for intelligence so welcome and unexpected. My friends were not less surprised than myself at this account of my wealth. Mr. D——'s letter on the subject was satisfactory, and contained the most polite and friendly assurances of attention to my little fortune.

" Mrs. Ward received me with a pleasure which she took no pains to conceal. ' I know not,' said she, ' how it happens, but I feel, my dear Mary, as if you had escaped a danger. *I* do not like this Mr. Brown: I bless God you have done with him and his silly wife. I suspect that neither the one nor the other possesses a grain of generosity. When Mr. Brown called upon me to know the

the terms of my school, he informed me of the dreadful event which had clouded your prospects in life. He mentioned, without any reference to the little provision which now appears, your forlorn situation, objected to thirty pounds a year, and proposed you as a half-boarder. 'Did you know, sir,' asked I, 'the unfortunate father of this young lady?'—'Oh, yes,' replied he: 'we were many years intimate when young men. Poor Courtney did not forget me: his consignments were very considerable indeed! I have lost a good correspondent by his death.'—'Has the poor young lady no relations in this conntry?' asked I.—'No,' answered he: 'she had an uncle; but he settled at Hamburg, and is, I believe, dead; for I have not heard of him for several years: and as to her mother, she was an orphan, and Courtney married her for love. He had strange notions, Mrs. Ward: but a man who is rich may do any thing; and he did not live to see difficulties. Poor fellow! he was as thoughtless and generous as a prince.'

prince.'—'I heard this man with indignation,' continued Mrs. Ward, 'and finally desired he would send you to me on any terms, on condition they should be secret ones, and that I should be at liberty to act relatively to your situation with my pupils as I judged proper. He eagerly closed with this offer, and proposed twenty pounds a year foryour board and dress.' I attempted to speak. 'Stop,' cried she, 'I have not finished: I should not have been thus explicit without design. I am not so disinterested as your now palpitating heart conceives, though I do not deny the motives of my first interference in your favour; for the Being whom it is my duty and my glory to imitate will not, I trust, reject them. I saw you; and in a very short time I discovered that I had made an *excellent bargain*, which by the way oftener happens in the traffic of benevolence than some very prudent people think possible. I calculated by Mr. Brown's arithmetical tables, and I found that I gained by you; for your place at my

table

table did not cost me a penny, and your abundant wardrobe has prevented nearly every want of a supply. Your needlework has answered to every trifling contingency, and your twenty pounds have annually paid your different masters. Thus balanced, you perceive that I have pocketed all your dutiful and affectionate services, besides the credit of being generous, with a heart which has not yet learned to limit its grateful effusions.' She smiled benignantly at the tears which fell from my eyes. 'But now, my dear Mary,' continued she, 'come and forward my own selfish purposes; for, believe me, I have not forgotten them. Miss Carrington is going to be married. Will you supply her place on the same terms of twenty pounds a year, and make me happy?' I grasped her hand. 'Your situation, my child, will not be splendid,' resumed she: 'but it will be safe; and that Providence which now opens to you an asylum for your youth and inexperience, will continue to protect you by its power, whilst with virtue, humility,

humility, and persevering industry, you merit its never-failing interposition.'—'Oh!' cried I, falling on my knees, 'let me here bless and praise its merciful, its gracious, its unmerited favour!'

"The excellent Mrs. Ward wept with tender sympathy; and, as I trust, had, in that moment, a foretaste of the recompence which will, in another and better life, crown her benevolence. I was shortly after installed in my office; in which if I did not succeed, at least I exerted all the powers of my mind, with the unabating wish of so doing. In the peaceable exercise of my duty, in the confidence and approbation of my benefactress, I remained till I reached my twenty-second year. Time had softened my rugged nurse, Adversity:—alas! perhaps it had done more; it had perhaps erased from my memory her awful and instructive lessons. Again she returned with the chastening rod; again did my sinking soul shrink from the suspended blow.—It fell; but with mercy. Mrs. Ward

was

was suddenly seized with an apoplectic fit. I was with her at the moment, and thought I saw her expire, and with her my own happiness. Fortunately, the means promptly applied were efficacious: she gradually recovered her mental faculties, and some degree of bodily strength; but one side was rendered irrecoverably useless. Her good and affectionate daughter, who had married and settled in Devonshire, and had on the first notice of her mother's danger attended her in person, used such arguments as induced Mrs. Ward to give up her school. Her extreme feebleness enforced this measure, and hastened its execution. I was left by my friend as a precious deposit with Mrs. Wilson, and with a special charge to leave my future destination entirely to her care, and on no account to quit my new asylum without her concurrence.

"With Mr. and Mrs. Wilson I had only those regrets which they could not remove, but which the improving state of my mother, for so I am permitted to call Mrs. Ward, greatly

greatly alleviated. Mr. Wilson was assiduously engaged in teaching his sons Latin. My leisure induced a desire of learning it, and I became his pupil also. In my progress I found it of so much advantage to my knowledge of general grammar, and to those languages in which I had already made some proficiency, that I went further into it than I had at first thought of doing. My instructor was able, and I was diligent; and that which at the commencement was a dry task, became an inexhaustible source of rational pleasure.

"Mrs. Ward, after two years' patience, saw her views for me successful. She placed me with a lady who had been the friend of her youth, and whose attachment had resisted all the influence of time and circumstances. In an elevated situation, her heart had constantly acknowledged the less prosperous Mrs. Ward; and she resigned to her judgement the first objects of her cares. She had two daughters; and to these young ladies I became governess, with an interest

in

in the family that no merit of which I can with justice boast could have procured me. In this eligible situation I have remained till within these few weeks. The mother of my pupils is now at Nice; her health requiring the air of a milder sky than ours. I was over-ruled in my intention of accompanying the family, by Mrs. Ward, who had, jointly with her friend, prepared the mind of Mrs. Needham for an adoption of their kindness and confidence in respect to me. I have passed the holidays with her; and without detracting from that sentiment of gratitude which I owe to her hospitality and flattering good will, I think I know the motive which has principally governed her conduct, and influenced my friend's advice that I should remain in England. Yes, my dear miss Wentworth, I do know it, and it is time that you also should know it. *Your interest*, *your happiness*, suggested the measure, and urged the means. Mrs. Needham lost no time in placing before me her difficulties in regard to you; with those

those impediments which had frustrated every benevolent purpose of your improvement.

" ' Miss Wentworth,' said she to me, ' possesses all those powers of understanding, all those qualities of mind, which the most enlightened parent would covet for a child. But indolence, mental and bodily indolence, depress the one, and threaten to lay waste and corrupt the other. No interest impels me to charge myself with a pupil, from whom I can expect nothing but vexation and disgrace, unless a speedy reformation can be effected: but I know the extreme and mistaken fondness of her guardians, and I dread her falling into the hands of those for whose integrity I cannot be so responsible as for my own. This child is no common subject; nature has destined her to act a part both honourable and useful, and her deviations will be attended with evils proportioned to those faculties which she neglects or abuses. I have sometimes been disposed to consider this singular aversion to every species of activity, as arising, in part,

part, from the climate in which she was born, and in which she has lived till within these two years; but this opinion yields before the conviction which daily presses upon me the true cause that has so powerfully operated upon her constitution both mental and corporeal; and from which all the evils which threaten her may be with certainty deduced. These are the early habits of her infancy, and the unrestrained indulgence which since that period has not only permitted but encouraged them. Her friends seem to have sought for no other gratification than that of seeing her grow up to maturity in supine negligence and unthinking ease. Sheltered by the care of others, surrounded by wealth and unlimited abundance, they have appeared to regard her as one exempted from the duties of a rational and the usefulness of a social being; and solicitous not only to supply her wants, but even to prevent her wishes, they think they perform that duty which is at once the object of their anxious care and benevolent

purpose. But, my dear miss Courtney, they do not understand this young creature, nor calculate the dangers they are preparing for her. I have studied her with all the attention and experience I possess. I am certain that there may yet be found a remedy for these evils. Nature by no means concurs with this apparent slothfulness; nothing can be more remote from her natural character; for *there* all is active and ardent. She is endowed with a vigorous mind, a high spirit, and a quick sensibility; she is generous even to profusion; steady in her attachments, and formed to communicate happiness: this principle is so innate in her, that it has resisted even the prevailing influence of laziness in a variety of instances, and I have seen her active for another, when nothing personal would have tempted her to walk across the room. She would indignantly and obstinately meet severity; nor does it enter into my code of laws, neither will my duty permit me to attend exclusively to this interesting and unfortunate child.

You appeared to me to be a proper agent to supply this inability on my part; and my opinion has been amply sanctioned, not only by my friend Mrs. Ward, but by the testimony of your virtue and talents, which lady N—— left behind her. I have used every argument to induce Mr. and Mrs. Delmy to engage you as private governess to miss Wentworth. They are too wise and too good to oppose truth, and they ingenuously acknowledged the necessity of changing their plans in respect to this favourite child; but Mrs. Delmy with tears confessed that it could never be effected under her roof. They then urged me to the adoption of the course I now propose for your acceptance, promising that your conditions will never reach their generosity. Miss Wentworth at her return is to be a parlour boarder, and entirely under your direction and instructions. I have already secured another lady to supply miss Paget's place, and now only wait your decision——Shall I confess to you, my dear young lady, that I

was by no means flattered by a distinction to which pecuniary advantage and comparative ease were annexed? It is however true. I was even troubled and dismayed by the apprehension that the duty was beyond my abilities. Mrs. Needham persuaded me, and my *mother* seconded her. You appeared, and I yielded.

"Every measure since pursued has been at my discretion; and it now depends on you to avail yourself of the wishes and purposes of your friends. You have talents, if you choose to cultivate them; you have powers and endowments of mind, if it be your pleasure to employ them; you have health and strength, spirits and youth. What inestimable treasures!... Will you abuse them? You have instruction, precept, example, and patient kindness. Will you reject them? *Choose*, and speedily, whether these invaluable gifts are to be honourably cultivated and employed, or sunk in sloth and ignorance. Be not deceived by the smiling and betraying face of your prosperous fortune in your adoption

adoption of the part you are called upon to take. Be assured, that to the most elevated condition of human life are annexed duties which demand all our active powers; and be assured likewise, that the most elevated condition cannot insure you from the wretched state of an enfeebled mind and body; for the victim of sloth is exposed to danger from foes too contemptible to be feared by any who are sensible of their own powers, and of their impotence. We have met as *friends*, and as *friends* we will continue—or part: for, without giving up my claims to that modesty, which with me is the test of a well-ordered mind and a cultivated understanding, I will tell you frankly, that I rate my abilities, and value my time, too highly, to lavish either one or the other on incorrigible idleness, or stubborn indocility. With a word, you will find your piano forte in my apartment, which is destined for our sole use: with a word, your different masters will return to a duty which they will engage in with pleasure, whilst they find

find their time something better than a mere exchange for your money. I will give you my word, that in one year's application you may yet redeem four or five which you have suffered to escape you. Read this letter with attention: it will teach you to estimate your present condition properly. It will show you how insecure, how unstable, your present resources are. It will point out to you those on which you may rely with more permanent hope and better grounded expectation; but it will fail altogether in its purpose, if it do not open your heart to the important and just reproof directed to the 'unprofitable servant who hid his lord's money in the earth.'

"I remain, &c. &c.

"MARY COURTNEY."

The next morning, at breakfast, Mrs. Warren resumed the subject of the preceding evening. "You have," said she, "by this time attained a knowledge of miss Courtney, now lady G——; and I doubt not but

but that you are well disposed to esteem and love her. It only remains for me to say, that she acted upon my mind with an influence which might almost be called magical. To resemble miss Courtney, to do what miss Courtney did, was the governing principle of every part of my conduct; and always disposed to extremes, I carried my assiduity to a pitch that nothing less than her friendship would have tolerated. Victorious over myself, I now began to taste the recompense of my application. My drawings decorated Mrs. Delmy's dressing-room; I was called out with fond delight to sing and play to her friends; and Mr. Delmy on tiptoe, his venerable face beaming with pride and pleasure, would listen to my idle prattle in French, with a native of that country who was intimate in the family. No incitements were like these precious ones: my father's approbation accompanied them: he now began to look forward to his reunion with a child, who he had been taught to hope would satisfy his fondest wishes—

wishes—but who was not permitted to hear a father's blessing—for about this time I had the misfortune of losing him.

"In the affection and under the guardianship of Mr. Delmy, consolation was not distant; and tranquillity soon succeeded this first sorrow of my life. Something yet remained for me to do, in order to be the exact model of miss Courtney. It was necessary that I should know Latin, and help Mrs. Wilson to make my frocks and petticoats into such as suited her children. Mrs. Wilson, delighted with a project so consonant to her wishes, prepared for our reception, and miss Courtney and myself became her guests in the summer. The Latin was not forgotten: but needle-work of all kinds soon wearied me, and does so still. A little cart, and Emily Wilson by my side, were temptations not to be resisted; the frocks, &c., were left to miss Courtney; whilst I, under the care and guidance of Mr. Wilson, was driving my companion, and gaining strength, activity, and the colour of a milk-

maid.

maid. Our visits to these amiable people were from this time annual; and the Delmys, who carried blessings wherever they entered, contrived to diffuse them in such a manner as shed not a temporary joy only, but a durable comfort: for young Wilson is now in Mr. Delmy's service as head clerk, and his younger brother is his agent in Jamaica. At fifteen I quitted Mrs. Needham's house, with a sense of those obligations which time can never erase from my mind. Miss Courtney shared with me the hearts and the comforts of my home.

"At nineteen Mr. Warren took it into his head to marry the slattern; for I never could arrive at my friend's elegant neatness. Mr. and Mrs. Delmy thought him worthy of their charge; and, taking into the account their partial love of me, a higher eulogium is needless.

"Affairs relative to my property in Jamaica obliged us to make a voyage thither immediately after my marriage. Mr. Warren assiduously cultivated a taste, which his par-

tiality for me produced in him: we both loved retirement and reading, and both found we had resources for the one and pleasure from the other. Our residence in the island now drew to a period. Various unforeseen delays had procrastinated it beyond our limited time. We had seen four years elapse instead of two, and began to count the weeks which would restore us to our dear friends in London: but Jamaica had its dangers, from which I was not destined to escape. A violent fever deprived me in an hour of full security, and, as I conceived, of complete felicity . . . of the best" Mrs. Warren stopped. ". Let me," said she, with eyes streaming with tears, " pass on to the moment when I found myself in the consoling arms of Mrs. Delmy . . . I cannot think of those events, which clouded every prospect of my life during my last six months stay in Jamaica.

" During my absence from England, miss Courtney had been the cherished guest and the comfort of the good Delmys; and never would

would have quitted their protection, had not sir George G—— persuaded her and them that she was necessary to his happiness. He had married his eldest daughter, and had only one child besides, too young to supply to him those domestic comforts which he was formed to want and to communicate. Frances G—— was only seven years old, and her father by this marriage secured to her advantages not less important than his own happiness. You will see this young lady this morning, and I think you will acknowledge in her manners another evidence of the extraordinary merit of her mother."—

"We will lose then," replied I, "no time. You have used great pains to convince me that you are a *copy* of lady G——. I am so satisfied with it, that I wish much to ascertain a point hitherto doubtful to me. I have heard that examples are to be found in which the scholar has outrivalled the master: I am disposed to believe this, when 'nature lends a grace beyond the rules of art:' and you are," said I smiling, "her favourite

favourite child, and I cannot believe that she would give you up, even to a lady G——."

We immediately repaired to lady G—'s. I confess to you, my Eliza, that, pleased as I was with this lady, and much as I admire and esteem her, Mrs. Warren stood the competition with a degree of interest with me, which rendered me perhaps a partial judge. Lady G——'s mind appears to have taken a certain colouring from the events of her life, which is often mistaken for cold neglect, if not supercilious pride, by those who do not interest her. The simplicity of Mrs. Warren's heart sheds an undescribable grace on her most indifferent actions. Every one loves her, from the persuasion that she loves them. A certain absence of *self*, a certain good will to others, manifests itself in her most ordinary intercourse. She is served by her domestics with a zeal and an alacrity of which I have seen few examples; for it appears to me as if they all persuaded themselves that she was a

darling

darling child, or some such precious deposit, committed to their charge. This sweetness of temper, this innate goodness, is the fascinating charm which lulls envy to repose; for no one envies Mrs. Warren. Lady G—'s reserve disappears in the company of those whom she esteems; while the powers of her mind, and the charms of her conversation, distinguish her as superior to most women. Mrs. Warren on these occasions looks around her with an air of triumph, and delights in the attention she sees paid to her. The animated gaiety of the one is happily contrasted by the solid, and, if I may be allowed to use the term, the argumentative understanding of the other. Mrs. Warren is never so lively as with lady G——: this she calls provoking her, till, forgetting her purpose, she insensibly discovers a solidity of judgement that calls for all the strength of lady G——. The worthy Mr. and Mrs. Delmy live entirely in the country, and in the neighbourhood of sir George G——. My friend divides her time with them. Her late

late visit to me was the first time of her seeing London since her return to England, except in passing through it. She threatens it shall be the *last*, unless we pass some time with her father and mother (so she calls the Delmys) next summer. Your grandfather, with the gallantry of a man of forty, and the sincerity of one of seventy, has declared himself her captive, and engaged for obedience. Lady G—— considers herself included in this arrangement, and writes me word that Frances is all diligence in the expectation of seeing the *redoubtable* Eliza Palmerstone, whom, notwithstanding, she is more disposed to *love* than to *fear*.

Adieu, my dear child! You will not disappoint the expectations of your friends, nor disgrace

Your tender and

Affectionate mother,

ANGELICA PALMERSTONE.

Letter X.

THE PEARL NECKLACE,

OR THE

HISTORY OF MISS HANWAY.

MY DEAR ELIZA,

The events which occurred in our late excursion down to N—— appear to have made a very deep impression on your mind. Neither the novelty of the scene nor the variety of your amusements seemed to weaken its force; and since your return home you have recurred to them again and again. There is nothing in this to surprise me; nor will you be at any loss to account for the interest these circumstances have with you, when you have read this letter. We will, in order to investigate the subject more fully, enter into a detail of the events which have thus forcibly laid hold of your mind.

You

You are no stranger to your grandfather's attention and tenderness to his horses: he determined to leave them at C——, during our short stage to Vernon Park, which lay twelve or fourteen miles out of our direct road, and to meet them the next morning. On entering C—— we found the town in an unusual bustle: it was the assize week, and the judge was that instant going into the court.

At the inn we met with an unexpected impediment to our design. The horses which we wanted were in their pasture at some distance; delay was inconvenient to us, we having appointed to be at Mrs. Ackerman's by dinner, and knowing that she had invited friends expressly to meet us. We reluctantly resolved therefore to proceed with our own horses; when Joseph entered the room to inform us that one of the leaders had somehow galled his shoulder; at the same time insinuating that 'the road was not the best in the world.' I obviated at once a difficulty which I well knew would render

render your grandfather uneasy for the whole of the day : I proposed dressing at the inn, whilst the innkeeper sent a person for his horses. This arrangement was adopted : but, on asking for a bed-chamber, I was told that they were all occupied except the landlady's own room, which was at my service. I accepted it with thanks, and she immediately led the way to it.

On entering the apartment, we were surprised by the sight of a girl of about your own age, who was tied to the bed-post, and was weeping bitterly ; the mother, as it appeared, having in her zeal for our accommodation forgotten the culprit she had confined there. She looked confused, and said, " You see, ladies, a very naughty girl ; but I will remove her instantly," untying as she spoke the ribbands that fastened her.—" What fault has she committed?" asked you in a tone of pity.—" Oh ! my dear young lady," replied the good woman, " I am ashamed to tell you ; but every one will hear of her disgrace ! She has gotten a sad and wicked

trick of purloining every thing that takes her fancy; and yesterday she brought from school a silver thimble, although she has one of her own, and knew she had it in her pocket: she was seen by her mistress to take the one in question from the work-bag of one of the scholars. This is not her first offence by many; and if she be not corrected she will bring her parents to shame and sorrow, and herself to utter ruin. Yes," added she, turning to the weeping girl, whilst her voice rose to anger; "yes! you will come to the same wretched condition as the ladies who are to be tried to-day for theft; and like them you may come to the gallows!"

The distress of the poor child, and our limited time for our toilet, prevented any inquiries relative to the singular trial to which the landlady alluded: I therefore dismissed them, recommending lenity to the one, and better behaviour to the other.

At our friend's, we met a numerous party assembled. After dinner the conversation turned

turned on the extraordinary trial which we had heard mentioned at the inn; it seemed to interest every one present; and it was no wonder, for several of Mrs. Ackerman's guests knew the young ladies, and had frequently met them in society. They were sisters, and daughters of a very respectable officer in the army: happily their parents were deceased. Their fortunes were not abundant, but sufficient to support them in independence: their education and connexions gave them a place in society at once honourable and secure: and to these advantages they brought youth and beauty and pleasant manners: few had rejected these recommendations; and few young people in the town or its vicinity enjoyed more notice and favour. They were notwithstanding actually under prosecution at the suit of a very respectable shopkeeper at C——, on the charge of having clandestinely taken from his shop various articles, such as lace, muslin, ribband, &c. &c.

They had been imprisoned some weeks, and

and were that day to appear on trial. "Will they be hanged?" asked you with almost breathless terror. A gentleman next you, with great tenderness, explained to you the nature of their offence, and the degree in which it was amenable to the laws of their country. He concluded by saying, "They must appear in court, in order even to be acquitted: the prosecutor is a worthy humane man, and has adopted such measures as will secure them from further disgrace. If he appear, they must be convicted: they are sensible of his lenity, and mean to retire immediately from this part of the world."

You listened with the profoundest attention to his discourse, and with eager curiosity to the different opinions which were supported. Since your return home you have related this story to all your friends, not omitting the innkeeper's daughter.

Last night you resumed the subject with me: you observed, that it yet seemed incredible to you, that these ladies should be actually

actually guilty of the crime laid to their charge. You contended also for the innocence of the girl. "She might heedlessly have occasioned the suspicions of her schoolfellows....she might be falsely accused....she might, supposing she took the thimble, have no intention of keeping it," &c. I attended very seriously to your arguments; for it was *innocence* pleading for the *unfortunate:* but I was obliged, in my turn, to recall to your memory the facts which your compassion had overlooked. The shop had been repeatedly robbed. Mr. S—— suspected those whom he employed in it. His precautions did not conceal these suspicions. The persons who were the objects of them were stimulated, by a regard for their own honour and character, to as great a degree of vigilance as their master. They heedfully observed every person who entered the shop. They detected these ladies. Their measures were taken. Again and again they saw them convey things into their muffs and pockets. At length, on perceiving one

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of them secrete a piece of lace, they stopped them: a search ensued; and the lace, with other articles, was found concealed about them. Their lodgings were next visited; and several articles bearing Mr. S——'s mark were found in them, and to which he and his people swore. It is," continued I, "shocking to the mind to admit such facts as these; and I still hope the many tales of this sort are unfounded in truth: but I do not see how we can reject such evidence as *this*." You were silent. At length changing your ground, you said, "At any rate, I must think Mr. S—— very inhuman to prosecute them. Is he not responsible for all the misery and ruin which now await these unhappy young women? Ought he not to have reproved them secretly, and placed before them the dreadful consequences of persisting in such disgraceful crimes? Would not you have acted thus?" asked you. I will repeat my answer *here*. I told you, I could not decide on what might have been the result of my weakness, or, if it pleased

you

you better, my compassion, had I been called to the same painful duty: "but," continued I, "we must not forget the obligations we are under to society. The invasion of the rights and property of others contains in it an injustice so flagrant, that it is the interest and duty of every one to check the temptation by punishing the offender. Lenity may, and often does, mistake its purpose; and, by the pardon it grants to *one* criminal, encourages many to expect the same exemption from disgrace and punishment. It is with the view to deter from vicious actions that pains and penalties are annexed to the commission of them. I do not see on what ground these ladies could plead for special favour; nor do I believe that you have exactly examined the motives which so powerfully excite your commiseration. The only allowable extenuation for them cannot be urged. It was not necessity that impelled them to theft. They cannot soften the rigour of justice by pleading ignorance, and the vicious habits of uninstructed life;

life; for these offenders had not only the restraints of education, but those of honour, of the rank they held in society, and a quick sense of shame, to deter them.

"Let us compare with these young ladies a poor half-naked wretch, who steals a cloak to cover herself from the cold, or a loaf of bread to satisfy her hunger. Place, my Eliza, these elegant and fashionable girls by the side of a creature thus forlorn! condemned by the hard circumstances of her condition to mental darkness, and stimulated by actual want; rendered daring by hardship, and insensible to all shame but that which includes corporal punishment; and then balance the motives by which each must have been impelled to an act of dishonesty, and those which each had to oppose to the temptation. If justice were not wisely restrained by law, would she not say, in the one case, 'Thou hast stretched forth thy hand and hast taken what thou needest, but it was not thine to take:—depart in peace, and sin no more.' But with what a severe frown

frown would she contemplate those offenders who had been actuated by no motives but those of a frivolous and debasing vanity, or the more miserable suggestions of avarice! What would and ought to be said to these, and such as these, who have, in defiance of decorum, of example, and of a better knowledge, boldly overstepped the fences of conscience and honour; who have repeatedly defrauded another, by deliberate and concerted plans; and who have wickedly sheltered themselves by their remoteness from suspicion, at the same time implicating the innocent, unfortunately within its reach; who have enjoyed without remorse a reputation which they knew they had forfeited, and seen, it may be, a fellow-creature deprived, by their secret crime, of an honest name, and the bread which depends on it? Recollect, that no condition of life can plead an apology for vice. If mercy admit of any extenuation for wickedness, it must and it ought to be reserved for ignorance, and for those whose condition in life exposes them to the

snares and examples of the unprincipled, and to the wants and temptations of wretchedness."

I have been led much further into this subject than would have been necessary, were you not still to be informed that it is asserted by many that such examples of depravity are not unfrequent. Happily I have never had any better evidence of a fact of this nature, than public report, except in the instance before us. I should hope that the credit given to many tales of a similar kind which have circulated, belongs rather to a love of the marvellous, than to a conviction of their truth.

I shall finish this letter with the relation of a very melancholy event, communicated to me by a young married lady whom I formerly met at Tunbridge. It is so applicable to the foregoing subject, that I engage in the detail of it with cheerfulness: it appears to me peculiarly calculated to enforce that lesson, which in youth is so essential that it forms the basis on which alone virtue can securely

securely rest. Remember, that no examples of goodness, nor the most happy indications of a virtuous disposition, will secure you from the inroads of vice, without self-command, and a steady, undeviating principle of rectitude; and in order to acquire these, you must exercise vigilance, and habitual consideration, even in regard to what may appear the *common* and *ordinary* actions of your life; but I cannot repeat it too often, admit no such acceptation: the moral actions of an immortal being are all important, as they all tend, in some degree, to his degradation or exaltation.

Mrs. Erlingford and myself became acquainted by means of a common friend; and when this lady quitted Tunbridge, our intercourse, which had been frequent, was still more intimate. We had made an appointment to go to the ball given by the master of the ceremonies, and Mrs. Erlingford had engaged to call on me in her way to the rooms. Within half an hour

of her expected arrival, I was, whilst finishing the business of the toilet, suddenly seized with a faintness and giddiness in my head. Your father, who was with me, was alarmed —but without reason, for I recovered in a few minutes. Fearful, however, of the complaint returning, by my exposing myself to heated and crowded rooms, he urged me to give up the ball. I instantly complied, on condition that he should not: and he acceded to these terms.

Knowing that my friend would be with me before my message could reach her, I reserved my apology till she came, and, divesting myself of some of my superfluous finery, quietly placed myself on the sofa. In a few minutes she entered, received my excuses, and commended my prudence; but declared that she would not leave me till Mr. Palmerstone's return, "which," added she, smiling, "will, I am sure, be as soon as he can secure his honour; for he looks like a banished man." Your father allowed

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the truth of her observation: we persevered, and he reluctantly quitted us.

When left to ourselves, I made her some compliments on her dress, which was remarkably elegant, and I particularly noticed a very fine string of pearls which hung on her bosom, and to which was affixed a large hair locket set round with diamonds. I remarked their size and perfect water, and added 'that I had never seen any more beautiful.' "Yes, answered she, "they are very fine ones, but," pressing the locket gently as she spoke, "they have cost me *very dear*." Not perceiving her meaning at once, I replied, 'I did not doubt it, for they were very valuable.' "I did not advert to the *price*," replied she, "for of that I know nothing; they were my mother's, whom I lost when an infant, and as her legacy I now possess them." She sighed, and a tear glistened in her eye. "But, my dear Mrs. Palmerstone," added she, "I never see this necklace without recalling to my mind the most sad and trying hours of my life. I

see,"

see," continued she, "that I have excited your curiosity, and I will, if you please, gratify it." I bowed, and she proceeded.

"At the death of my mother, my father's sister took charge of me and the family. We lived constantly in the country; our neighbourhood was numerous and genteel. A nobleman's seat and park were within five miles of us, and made the ornament and pleasure of the environs; for the place was one of the most beautiful in England, and the possessor of it the most worthy and respectable of men. Our every-day, I may say our every-hour, neighbour was a Mr. Hanway. He was a widower, and, like my father, had only a daughter, who was nearly of the same age with myself: but not having the comfort of a sister to superintend his family, miss Hanway from an infant had been consigned to the care of a distant relation of her mother, who lived very remote from him.

"His house and grounds bordered on my father's. A small wood, the common property

property of both, was the only boundary between us, and the friendship which united the proprietors rendered any other useless. Mr. Hanway had repeatedly endeavoured to steal away my father's superintendant, and had even contrived to bring him cordially to second his designs: but my aunt's tender affection for me, and attachment to her brother, steadily opposed themselves to an union, which, under different circumstances, I have good reason to believe would have met with her concurrence.

"Mr. Hanway, in submitting to a refusal, lost neither her friendship nor his own good humour: he often talked pleasantly of her cruelty, which time had softened, and wished his girl were a *boy*, in order to be related to her one way or other.

"Of this daughter I heard continually, and I felt for her a sort of interest which bordered on affection. The death of the lady with whom she had lived, and who had been for years lame and infirm, had occasioned a change in miss Hanway's situation. She

She had been placed in a good school in town, in which she remained three years, passing the vacations with a lady with whom her mother had resided before her marriage.

" At length the long-wished-for and expected time arrived: miss Hanway returned to her paternal roof, and at an age to take upon her the government of her father's family. She was approaching to her eighteenth year, and was very handsome and lively: with a good-humoured and obliging temper, she possessed many accomplishments of fashionable education, without vanity or pretensions. Our intimacy commenced from the first hour of her arrival: it was an event of common joy; and our fathers, seeing with pleasure our growing attachment, had a path cut through the little wood in order to facilitate our communication; and thus laid the gardens open, and rendered the two habitations like one.

" Some months passed with mutual satisfaction: we became daily more and more endeared to each other. At this period I

was

was exhibited for the first time at a formal dinner, at the house of one of our most remote neighbours, who resided but seldom at this seat. My worthy aunt was very solicitous to display me with all possible advantage to this fashionable and somewhat stately family: a new dress was prepared for the occasion; and my father, who waited in the drawing-room with unusual patience, and some curiosity to examine me after the labours of my toilet, with some perturbation tied round my neck this ill-fated string of pearl, telling me it was my dear mother's gift.

"The day proved extremely sultry, and we availed ourselves of the polite entreaties of the lady of the house to prolong our visit for a full though late moon. The only guests besides ourselves were inmates of the family, and consisted of two or three ladies and as many gentlemen, very fashionable, and to me very unpleasant people. We reached home at a very late hour, and, exhausted by our tedious visit, and the still

remaining closeness of the air, turned into the common sitting-room on alighting from the carriage. My father, no less weary than ourselves of a visit of dull ceremony, instantly retired to the library. The occurrences of the day were now chatted over by my aunt and myself; and I, who had been intimidated by the inquisitorial looks of the fine town-bred ladies, indemnified myself and my returning vivacity by laughing at their affected airs.

"During this time we were disencumbering ourselves of our ornaments. I could not disentangle the knot which fastened my necklace. At my request, my aunt with more patience soon effected it; she gave it into my hand, and I carelessly placed it on the side cushion of the sofa on which we were seated, and on retiring left it there.

"On the following morning my aunt came into my bed-chamber with a black shagreen case in her hand. 'You will want *this*,' said she to me, 'for your pearls. Where are they? I will put them in for you.' I instantly recollected my heedlessness, and said I would

I would fetch them. But I had answered for too much. Neither inquiries nor searching, menaces nor promises, were of any effect. The necklace had disappeared.

"My father, to add to my concern, seemed more disturbed by this incident than I had ever seen him in my life, and the day passed in useless confusion and fruitless regrets. Some months succeeded, and I had reason to think that my father had forgotten his chagrin in the same degree at least as I was reconciled to my loss.

"The son and heir of lord V—— now came of age, and great preparations were made to celebrate the event. Invitations were profusely sent round the country. A masked ball and supper entered into the plan of amusements. My friend and myself were not omitted on an occasion, in which we were politely and good-humouredly told that we should add to the promised pleasure. The novelty and expected eclat of the fête engaged our more than usual solicitude respecting our dresses; and

not

not satisfied with our own taste, it was determined that we should both have fancy dresses from London. They arrived at Mr. Hanway's, and a messenger was dispatched in haste to announce to me this very important news; the more welcome, as the delay of them had begun to alarm us, it being within two days of our engagement at lord V——'s. I staid late with my friend. Our orders had been exactly observed: all was in the most elegant style, and we anticipated with youthful vanity the expected pleasure of showing ourselves to advantage.

"Unfortunately, my eager desire of exhibiting my dress to my aunt led me to refuse the pressing solicitations of miss Hanway to pass the night with her. The evening was cold and wet; but I speedily reached home, attended by a servant loaded with band-boxes. This heedless impatience was punished. I was seized with a violent toothach in the night, which entirely banished sleep, and the morning discovered a swelled face and some degree of fever. This bad

news

news soon reached Sophia, and she came in haste to condole with me. The day passed, and my pain augmented. In the evening the ball was given up, and the servant who was dispatched for the apothecary to draw the unlucky tooth was charged with our excuses to lord V——. Sophia remained with me till the operator appeared; when, acknowledging her cowardice, she left me. The tooth was happily extracted, and my firmness recompensed by a night of sweet repose.

"The next morning it rained without ceasing, and Sophia only heard of my exemption from pain. In the course of the morning she wrote me a kind and sympathizing note expressive of her disappointment. This, although as kindly received, by no means lessened my regrets: but I did my best, perceiving that my good aunt was also vexed by this impediment, for which she observed with unusual acrimony, 'I had to thank myself.' The swelling in my face was however

ever subsided, and I was without pain; and I began after dinner to compare with much secret discontent the hazard of going, with the mortification of staying at home. The conclusion added to my restlessness.

"The violent rain had ceased, the evening promised to be fair; and I watched the face of the clouds with pensive attention at the window. 'It will be a fine clear night after all,' said my good-natured aunt, looking at my father. 'Suppose, brother....' She hesitated. '.... Suppose, I say, we hazard a little for this poor lass?' My father had his fears. I in my turn looked, and he was subdued. 'Well,' said he, 'if she be sick, you must nurse her; but I bar dancing.' This decision sent us to our dressing-room in an instant; but with all our dispatch we did not reach the castle until the company were all assembled in the great saloon.

"On our arrival we entered into a small parlour, and sent for lord V——. He joined

joined us immediately, and received us with his usual cordiality, leading the way at the same moment to the saloon.

" On entering the motley crowd, I sought directly for my friend, anticipating the pleasure of surprising her. Knowing her dress, I discovered her with ease: she was engaged in conversation with a gentleman, and apparently with gaiety and interest. I cautiously advanced, and had just reached her, when two or three ladies, arm in arm, stopped me. In that moment judge of my astonishment! my pearl necklace struck my eyes! The locket was then only plain gold, and by no means a suitable appendage to it. I suppose the gentleman was observing this defect in so rich an ornament; for he held it up and examined it, saying something that obviously related to it; and Sophia laughing disengaged it from his hand, and dropped it into her bosom; I gazing immoveably all the time at her!

" Confounded and dismayed, I retired at length unobserved, and sought my aunt.

My

My intelligence surprised her; and taking my father's arm, they in their turn were convinced that miss Hanway actually wore the identical lost necklace. My father's former agitations returned: we quitted the room instantly, and retired to the same parlour into which we had been shown on our arrival.

"My confusion equalled my father's anger. I knew miss Hanway to be perfectly informed of every circumstance relative to my loss. Her father, as justice of the peace, had officially examined the servants, and it was impossible for me to conceive how it had found its way to her. My aunt suggested that she must have purchased it of the thief for some trifle: and my heart sunk, when I admitted to my mind a supposition which left her without excuse in my eyes.

"My father, with silent sternness, had in the mean time sent a message to lord V——, and to Mr. and miss Hanway. They now appeared... Suffer me to hasten over this scene... Sophia was asked by what means

means the string of pearl had come into her possession. She replied with a tremulous voice, 'that it was a legacy left her by the relation with whom she had lived from her infancy.' A deep and convulsive groan called our attention to Mr. Hanway, who sunk back in his chair, and appeared almost breathless. My father took his hand, and my aunt applied her salts: he recovered, and burst into tears.

"The wretched Sophia remained transfixed to her seat, and I stood by her, without the power of turning my eyes upon her. In a few minutes my father broke the silence that prevailed. He again seized the hand of Mr. Hanway: 'I have,' said he, 'acted unworthily . . . We are both fathers, we are friends and neighbours: but I have for a moment forgotten these ties. Pardon me, sir; a tender interest unites me to this useless bauble: it has subdued my reason and humanity. But suffer me to justify my honour; permit me to open the locket; and

and let all be forgotten from this miserable hour.'

" My aunt approached miss Hanway, whose face was now concealed in my bosom, and turning the locket to my father's hand he pressed a secret spring. It opened, and discovered the maiden name of my mother, and my father's, engraved at length, and a small knot of my mother's hair. We soon after quitted the house, as did likewise Mr. Hanway.

" On the following day lord V—— delivered the necklace to my father; and the affair was consigned to oblivion by *all* except the most injured. Mr. Hanway and his daughter set out for London two days after. An absence of some weeks had intervened, when the unhappy father returned by himself. He became cold and distant, and all friendly intercourse ceased. We learned that he had placed his daughter with a lady in town.

" In the mean time I had consigned my necklace

necklace to its case, with somewhat like horror and aversion, and bitterly lamented my want of prudence in pointing out my discovery to my aunt. Two years elapsed. My regrets continued; but I heard not a word of my friend, until we learned that she was returned to the Hall, and was supposed to be in a dying state.

" My anguish of mind on hearing this intelligence admits of no description: I determined at all events to see her, and my friends did not oppose my resolution. I sought the long neglected path to the house, with feelings I shall never forget; and was conducted by a servant into Sophia's dressing-room: it was empty, and a shower of tears relieved me. A young and genteel person surprised me in this agitation of mind. I had never seen her before, and hesitated in what manner to address her in so painful a moment. Her appearance, although extremely neat, was simple: but the elegance of her manners at once repelled the idea of her being a servant, though evidently

dently an inmate in the family. She accosted me with respect, and said, 'Miss Hanway is still in bed, my dear miss Dalrymple; she has passed a very bad night.'—'Oh!' exclaimed I, again yielding to my tears, 'she will not see me! Never shall I behold her again!'—'You are much mistaken,' replied she in the most soothing accents. 'She has spoken of you several times during the night, and I believe that her anxiety to see and embrace you has contributed to the increase of the fever. I will now announce you: but, my dear young lady, prepare yourself for this interview.'

"She quitted me, and in a few minutes returned, and conducted me to the door of Sophia's bed-room. 'For Heaven's sake,' said she opening it, 'be on your guard!' She then hastily withdrew.

"I entered. My friend was sitting in her bed supported by pillows; her emaciated arms extended to receive me; a cold and sickly dew stood on her brow, and a faint and sweet smile played on her lips. I sob-

bed

bed in her embrace. Her attendant and friend entered, and with a look of terror led me to the window. At length I respired, for I had been almost suffocated. 'Leave us, my dear miss Nelson,' said Sophia placidly: 'Maria will soon recover.' I approached once more the bed, and miss Nelson left the room.

"'You are surprised, my dear girl,' said she with composure, 'at a change which I regard as a blessing; because I contemplate in it somewhat more encouraging than you do. You weep, my Maria; and I rejoice—not that my career in life is destined only to reach to a few more feverish and suffering days, but because these days are soothed by faith and hope. This bed of sickness is the scene of my triumphs: it has insured to me a victory which will reach beyond the grave. I have already had a foretaste of those consolations which are reserved for the 'contrite of heart,' and I can exultingly say, 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.' My father has

has received with parental love his penitent child; and you, my Maria, seek your guilty friend to pardon and to pity her.—Miss Nelson too,'——she was interrupted by her entrance——'You talk too much,' said she affectionately. 'I must send your friend away,' smiling on me: 'miss Dalrymple must know my authority here.'—'Not yet, Emma, not yet,' cried Sophia with vivacity, taking my hand and placing it on miss Nelson's lips: 'not yet,' repeated she: 'I will not speak another word, if she stays and talks with you.'

"This interruption was seasonable: the conversation was less interesting; but I discovered a gentleness and sweetness in miss Nelson which charmed me. I was not, however, unobservant of the pallid hue which had succeeded to the hectic and beautiful glow on the cheek of my friend, and I rose to quit the room. 'You will come,' said she languidly, 'and help me to manage Emma: I shall destroy her! She is very headstrong, Maria, and listens to nothing

thing I can say: I wonder she is not dead with watching me.'

"You will imagine, my dear madam," continued Mrs. Erlingford, "the impression which this scene made on my mind and spirits. My father and aunt were little less powerfully touched by my relation of it. My father instantly quitted the room, and wrote to his friend Mr. Hanway. The answer to this letter included an invitation to pass the following day at the Hall. On our arrival, the two re-united friends stepped into Mr. Hanway's carriage, which was waiting, in order to take an airing. My aunt and myself joined Sophia in the dressing-room: she was on the sofa, and supported as in bed. She received us with cheerfulness, and after some little conversation with my aunt, relative to her complaints, observed that her mother had died of a consumption.—'But now,' pursued she, turning to Emma, 'listen to me, my love! and be tractable: go into the garden, and walk an hour: it is a delightful morning, and

and you must have air and exercise. Leave then your patient and your orders with the best woman, and the best nurse, in this county.' Miss Nelson placed a phial of cordial julep on the table, and withdrew.

" ' To that amiable and worthy young woman,' said Sophia as she shut the door, ' do I owe much of the comfort of this pressing hour: her attention to me is unremitting and unwearied; but these are the least of the obligations which I have to acknowledge.' Seeing us take the alarm at a prelude which, from the serious air of her countenance, denoted something like a purpose we wished to shun—she paused a few moments, and then with solemnity said, ' Indulge me, my friends: it gratifies me to recal past scenes. The comparison of what I once was, with that which I trust I am at present, is a cordial more efficacious than that before you, my good Mrs. Dalrymple.

" She looked at the phial. ' This,' said she, ' is useless but as it contents those about me:

me: the other communicates joy and peace: do not then interrupt me. I will spare your feelings as much as I can; for I know all the benevolent workings of your minds. But these are precious moments to me! and it is necessary that I should place the circumstances of my guilt before you, as well as the evidences of my repentance.' There was an irresistible persuasion in her words and manner. We were silent, and she proceeded. —'I will not attempt to enter into the detail of that progressive course of baseness and duplicity which at length conducted me to reproach and shame. I have long since rejected those extenuations, to which my feeble and alarmed conscience at first clung. I know that 'God judgeth not as man judgeth,' and that allowances will be made in favour of misguided and inconsiderate youth; but I know also that the apology of *ignorance* is very short. Short indeed are those pleadings allowed by the fallacious hope of an erring mind!—I perfectly recollect feeling that I was acting contrary to my duty, in

the paltry thefts to which the favourite maid-servant of my aunt instigated me: she was obliged, *even then*, to qualify my guilt by an argument of justice. She complained of the housekeeper, whom I did not love, and said she was a hypocrite, who spared merely with a view to her own profit; for that my cousin wished to make her servants comfortable, and allowed those indulgences which Barton withheld.

"'My next step was stealing from my lame and infirm relation a purse containing some new and trifling silver coin. I still remember the compunction which attended this crime, and the dread of detection.'—My aunt rose. 'The room grows very warm,' said she, going to the window. 'I do not see miss Nelson!'—'She will not return,' answered Sophia, 'till I ring: but be composed, I must be heard. At the death of my cousin I was removed to school. I was then in my thirteenth year, and an adept in all the mean subterfuges of habitual baseness. I concealed my depravity, and accomplished my

my miserable designs with cunning and circumspection. Once, and, blessed be God! only once, (she raised her eyes in pious gratitude,) did my erring footsteps conduct me to the complicated guilt of transferring to the innocent my crime, and the disgrace inseparable from it.

"'Miss Nelson was this victim of hardened effrontery and cruelty. She was a half-boarder in the house. Her conduct was irreproachable, and her temper so mild and obliging as to render her the general favourite of the family. Her father, a clergyman with a limited income and seven children, had with sedulous care improved this promising child, and prepared her excellent understanding for his future design of placing her as a governess in a private family; and with the view of giving her the necessary accomplishments of needle work, &c. he had placed her for two or three years in a capital school. I had no other motive for my conduct than the favouring circumstances for my own security, and these shifted the

guilt on this innocent creature. The stigma which I thus affixed to her character ruined the prudent intentions of her parents; but happily they rejected the accusation with scorn and indignation, although my measures were not suspected, much less detected. The injured Emma left the house, and some friends in it who believed that she had been injured.

"'The last and lamentable proof of my corruption regards you, my Maria.'—— 'Spare me!' I sobbed out, 'spare me, if you have mercy! I shall never forgive myself!' —'Have patience,' said she calmly: 'you are still ignorant by what means the pearls came into my possession. You and your family must still suspect the innocent; for I, alas! enjoyed an exemption from *all* that could lessen your love and confidence. You have not thought me a thief. I cannot die in peace without exposing to you the whole affair. Remember that that mercy which healeth the penitent heart, shields it from the abject shame of avowing its transgressions.

sions. The tribunal to which it has humbly confessed its sins, and before which it has with unfeigned sorrow lamented them, has sunk into nothingness the shame which attends repentance, in this world of error and partial judgement. One gracious hope of mercy from above renders it firm, and willing to meet disgrace in any other form. But I have none to fear here:—compassion softens your hearts, and perhaps too much.

"'Accident rather than design led me to your house on the fatal morning when you lost your pearls. I had arisen by mistake at a very early hour; none of our servants had quitted their beds. I made my way into the garden, promising myself a full indemnification for the loss of my repose by seeing the sun rise. After enjoying this glorious spectacle, I suddenly took the whim of surprising you in your bed, and immediately took the path through the wood. I met with no one. The glass door of the sitting-room was open, and I entered, meaning to gain the stair-case by that passage. In passing

ing the sofa, a book caught my eye. It was partly concealed by the cushion, and an impulse of curiosity led me to look into it. On taking it in my hand, the string of pearls to which it was slightly attached appeared. I will not now stop to define what were then my thoughts. I have believed, but I reject the thought, that in the first instant they were innocent, and only admitted the silly project of frightening you and Mrs. Dalrymple; for it is too certain that I not only secreted them, but withdrew with a guilty caution. I hurried home with the utmost care to avoid being seen; and fatally secure that no eye had marked me, save that all-seeing one which was not in my thoughts, I concealed myself in my room till the hour of breakfast, and then joined my father as usual.

"We had hardly finished, when Mr. Dalrymple entered, apparently agitated, and with much warmth related to us the extraordinary event of the morning. 'I value not the pearls,' said he, 'for their intrinsic worth;

worth ; but they are endeared to me by circumstances I can never forget, and I will leave nothing undone to recover them.' I sat terrified, confounded, and silent ; the truth trembling on my lips, and cowardly conscience suppressing it. Whilst thus irresolute, your father's resentment and vexation were more and more declared, and the gentlemen left me to proceed to the examination of the honest servants.

"'The die was now cast. I conceived that the time for an honourable retreat had escaped me, and endeavoured to quiet the perturbation of my spirits by a compromise with my conscience and duty. I determined to consult you, to trust to your aunt's influence ; and at any rate to disengage myself from a burthen I found so oppressive. Alas, my Maria! it was only the dread of detection that hung on my mind : in proportion as these fears subsided, and security seemed established, I lost sight of every good purpose ; and indifferent to the effects which I had

had produced, your uneasiness, your father's anger, and the dismissal of several servants, only suggested to me the necessity of caution.—Oh! cruel and insidious vice!' exclaimed she with emotion, 'I had yielded myself up to thy solicitations; thy snares now encompassed me; thy recompense was prepared. Knowing that you had never seen, much less worn, this ornament before the day you lost it; perfectly acquainted with every circumstance relative to your visit; the certainty of not meeting that family or any of their connexions at lord V——'s; joined to the positive proofs, as I imagined, of your inability to go, and the card of apology which I saw sent in your father's and aunt's name.... all united to betray me; when, excited by my vanity, I felt the desire of wearing *for that evening only* the pearls. Trusting to my father's usual inattention to female dress, I boldly met the danger—not however without using the precautions of that cunning, which oftener betrays the wicked

wicked than it covers them—I tied on the necklace in the carriage, and concealed it with my shawl.

"What followed, you have not forgotten. Neither will I dwell on that which is so indelibly engraven on my mind—my unhappy father's agonies, and my fruitless despair.

"'In London I was placed under the care of Mrs. Smith, the lady with whom I had always passed my holidays whilst at school. I found her much changed by the progress of a painful and incurable malady. But her reception of me was marked by more than her common kindness, and her conduct so delicately guarded, that I made no doubt but that my father, in tenderness to his lost child, had spared me the shame and disgrace infallibly affixed to the discovery of my offence. I received notwithstanding her affectionate attentions with a passive indifference: silent, dejected, and restless, I passed days and weeks unheeded, unemployed, and unenjoyed. From this stupor I was roused by

the illness of Mrs. Smith, which was painful to a degree of which I had no prior idea. I became diligent in my attendance, and the constant witness of those excruciating paroxysms which tore her feeble frame. With astonishment did I observe a fortitude which appeared to my unpractised mind more than human; her patience seemed to derive strength from her sufferings, and meek resignation to triumph over the pangs of nature. In her short intervals of ease she was composed and even cheerful, entered into every arrangement that could relieve those about her, and with the most grateful kindness remarked their zeal in her service.

"'In this situation she remained some weeks, and at length recovered to her usual state of weakness and suspension from pain. One morning I remarked to her the admiration which her patience and fortitude had excited in my mind, and added some reflections which pressed upon my sinking spirits. 'It would be folly,' answered she, 'were I not to endeavour, at least, to practise something

thing of that philosophy for which you so kindly give me credit; for, in the first place, nothing is more certain than that impatience and fretfulness aggravate bodily sufferings as much as they augment mental ones. But I have motives infinitely superior to any which have resulted from my experience, or which have been suggested to me even by reason, for the exercise of that patience, which has surprised you merely from the circumstances of your youth, and till of late your happy exemption from pain and suffering. I have, my dear child,' continued Mrs. Smith, 'the promise of a future recompense more than adequate to every evil I can possibly encounter in this life; and a glorious reward assured for every exertion of patience and resignation. But this firm rock of defence I will leave for a moment, in order to produce another argument of support and consolation. I have a very powerful persuasion on my mind, that from these very sufferings, which you have witnessed, I have extracted blessings which might

might otherwise have escaped me in a life of heedless prosperity and ease. I have long been convinced, my dear young friend,' added she, looking at me with affectionate solicitude, and gently sighing, 'that the human heart cannot well be purified, nor the human character sustained and dignified, without the seasoning of adversity. It is the tempered and hard implement of the skilful workman which gives to the diamond its lustre and its value; and that human being whose powers of mind have never been brought out by adverse fortune to trial, whose life has been one continual course of ease and supine security, resembles, in my opinion, the gem preserved with care in the cabinet of the curious, more on account of its rarity and imaginary worth than for its real excellence. You have of late,' continued she, placidly smiling, 'been selected from many a diamond thus uselessly preserved The pointed steel has broken through the incrustation which has till now obscured the brilliancy of that immortal

gem

gem within But I will drop my allusion. You have, my child—for I know all—you have recently received one lesson, a precious lesson, from the salutary friend of a moral and intelligent creature. You have experienced shame, trouble, and contrition. You have felt the privation of esteem, of confidence, of kindness. But your understanding admits, that, under the pressure of every natural evil, Providence had graciously provided for you an assured trust, and a refuge from despair.

"'Under these painful convictions of your mind, has it not occurred to you to contemplate the inestimable advantages resulting from this severe experiment? Has it not convinced you of the danger of thoughtless errors, and the extreme hazard of leaving human conduct to the miserable and blind guidance of an unprincipled and uninstructed mind? Are you not aware, that this moment is the establishment of your future existence; that your reason is now awakened; and that, instead of weakening its newly acquired

acquired powers by dwelling with unavailing anguish on the past, it demands only occasions of manifesting itself in the bright career of honour, of usefulness and of virtue? Do you imagine, can you for a moment conceive,' asked she with increasing energy, 'that the disgrace and uneasiness which have nearly overwhelmed you, have for their purpose nothing but the severe and bitter punishment of actual offence? Is it thus you have been taught to regard the almighty Parent of mankind? No, my Sophia! nor has your *earthly parent* been thus taught to imitate him. Your gracious and merciful Maker, your friends, society at large, expect better and more precious fruit from this painful occurrence. The approving eye of the divine Being waits but your humble wishes and endeavours to meet it... the hearts of your friends are prepared to give you a more honourable station than even that which, with so much inconsideration, you abandoned. You are young, my dear girl. Neither your opportunities nor instruc-

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tions have hitherto been favourable either to the enlargement of your reason or to your establishment in virtue. Left to the bias of every childish temptation and frivolous pursuit; simply cautioned with the common-place precepts of moral rectitude, indiscriminately and hastily inculcated, and as hastily heard and forgotten, you have been betrayed into errors for which you now blush; and feel as *atrocious*, in respect to yourself, that deviation which the honest candour of your mind would teach you to regard as *disgraceful* in another. But, my love, think not the blot indelible in that soul which is constituted with powers to reject sin and impurity, and which will never fail of assistance in its attempts to recover its destined splendour... *Repentance* and *amendment* will in no case, I firmly trust, of moral turpitude be rejected. Your recollection of your duty to God, and of your obligations to your fellow-creatures, has been produced by circumstances remote from habitual depravity and hardness

of

of heart. Accept then with gratitude, with pious joy and thanksgiving, a warning of such special grace and favour. Wipe away every tear from your eye, and think that purchase cheap at any price, which will insure in future life your feet from sliding and your heart from evil.'—She paused.

"'If,' continued she, 'forty years' seclusion from the busy world have served any of the intentions of wisdom, I think I may venture to say that I might be useful to you. We have leisure—let us endeavour to improve it. The most lively interest in your happiness prompts this proposal: the most sympathizing pity'—Her tears flowed too abundantly for her to proceed—Yes, my Maria, Mrs. Smith wept in compassion of your Sophia—'I have,' continued she, 'silently witnessed the distress of your mind. I see with unspeakable regret the ravages it has made on your health. This must not be, my dear friend. We must seek a cure for these ills... and be assured that we shall find it. And now permit this frankness to

invite

invite you to confidence: rely on my tenderness and counsels: neither the one nor the other will deceive you. You must get well,' added she, smiling benignantly on me: 'you must be cheerful, my dear Sophia; for you have in your hands the means of redeeming with honour and augmented respect this hour of humiliation.

"'From this time our mornings were devoted to reading, and my improvement was conducted by my excellent guide. The world I so much dreaded receded: I no longer considered its scorn as the first object of my fears, or the loss of its pleasures as a subject of reasonable regret. My views brightened, my opinions were rectified, and my religious faith was *more than a creed.* My mind was relieved from an insupportable burthen; and with a serenity, to which till that happy period I had been a stranger, I raised my hopes to that peace which this world can neither give nor take away. I was not long in this happy state

state of, I trust, pious submission without experiencing one of its gracious influences.

"'My father visited me: he received me once more to his affectionate breast: he blessed me and said, yes, my Maria, he said I should live to bless him. My return to virtue would have been indeed deficient, had not the remembrance of miss Nelson had its share in my rèpentant tears. No returns of peace could prevent the painful recollection of my conduct respecting her, and my declining health gave to these recollections a bitterness, happily imaginary; for there was no train of evil into which I did not fear I had been the cause of plunging this injured girl.

"'I communicated to Mrs. Smith this still unknown proof of my depravity. 'This is indeed,' said the good woman, 'being born again,' 'and this test of your sincerity and of your sorrow is also the prelude of your triumph. Fear nothing: your father will love you still better for your confidence in his

his generosity. Miss Nelson had good parents to shelter her from the effects of those suspicions you produced. Leave these cares to me: all shall be as you wish, and as justice requires. We will lose no time,' added she: 'your acknowledgement of the whole transaction, and the reparation it becomes you to offer, will be noble evidences of the present state of your mind, and powerful pleaders with a good heart.'

"'My complaint in the mean time became more and more alarming: to the cough was now added a pain in my side, so acute, that my physician ordered me a large blister, and I was confined to my bed. My dear father was in a state of anxiety, which revived that anguish I had hoped was past. I reproached myself without ceasing as the unhappy cause of his affliction, and every proof of his tenderness increased my remorse.

"'In this state of mental dejection and bodily infirmity was your poor Sophia, when miss Nelson and her father reached

Mrs.

Mrs. Smith's. My father, without signifying his intentions to me, had visited them, and brought them to town. Prepared as I was for this interview, it was nearly fatal to me. But here ended my struggles. Mr. Nelson soon taught me that I had yet to learn to die; and his soothing piety convinced me that it was not the hardest or the most difficult lesson assigned to mortals. You will, I hope, ere long know this true disciple of his benevolent master. I evaded for some time my father's wishes, and the advice of the medical gentlemen who urge my coming hither. A secret wish of sparing my father useless regrets in his future solitary home, had considerable weight with me; to these was added the society of Mrs. Smith and Mr. Nelson, who could not be with me here, the first being incapacitated by her infirmities from undertaking such a journey, and the latter, though within reach of London (in a few hours), being too remote from hence for his duty. I knew that Arrow-beech had no health in store for me.

My

My friends, however, prevailed. But, gracious God! I find it the sojourn of peace.'"

"On taking our leave in the evening my father kissed her cheek, and with assumed gaiety said, 'Do you know, my dear Sophia, that you have brought amongst us a little girl who dares to dispute my authority? This Emma of yours pretends to have a will of her own, and refuses to relinquish her post to 'the best nurse in the county.' Mrs. Dalrymple claims her rights, and you must be the arbitrator. I would leave you Maria; but I think these girls will do better to amuse you by turns, and take care of your father and myself in our rambles.' She smiled, and looked grateful. 'I understand,' said she, 'all the prudence and kindness of this arrangement. My Emma will submit. In the day, I shall have all my friends about me: but Emma must not be in my room in the night; she knows how often I have urged this necessity to her. I cannot imagine how she has hitherto supported the fatigue, and want of sleep.

"My

"My aunt continued with Sophia, and Emma and myself were alternately with her during the day, and as regularly called upon to our evening and morning rides by the gentlemen. During three weeks or a month our invalid appeared something the better for the change of air: she was cheerful and serene, and communicated to our hearts hopes which we cherished without daring to examine *the ground on which they rested.*

"One morning I was alone with her: she suddenly asked me, what was become of my string of pearls. I imagine I changed colour; for she added, sweetly smiling, 'Nay, be not alarmed, but I must have them once more in my possession.' I burst into tears, unable to answer her: she instantly dropped the subject.

"The next morning miss Nelson surprised me in my bed. I was terrified, and eagerly asked news of Sophia. 'She has passed a very bad night,' answered she; 'your aunt did not undress: but I am charged with a commission that admits of no delay. Sophia desires

desires you to send your necklace by me.' —'Good Heavens!' exclaimed I, 'is this a moment in which to recall so hateful, so distressing a subject?'—'Indulge her,' said Emma: 'Sophia Hanway is in no danger of having her mind disturbed by any earthly consideration.'—'Take it' cried I weeping, 'take it,' directing her to the place in which it was; 'only in pity let me not see it.' She took it, and left me instantly. The dread of beholding this hated memento hung on my spirits. When I joined Sophia, I threw my eyes fearfully on the table and sofa, and was relieved. She was more talkative than usual, but not a word was said of the odious string of pearl.

"A few more days were passed in fallacious hope and trembling apprehension, when she was seized with faintings which we supposed mortal; but they gradually subsided, leaving her in a state of feebleness which confined her from that time to her bed. In this situation she remained ten or twelve days; when on entering her room one morning

ing I found her propped up in her bed, stringing my pearls. An involuntary motion made me retreat. 'Come in,' said she placidly: 'I have just finished my work, and I have only to reconcile you to it: come and gratify me by your approbation of what I have done.' I approached the bedside, and, kneeling down, reclined my head on the pillow by her. My dear Mrs. Palmerstone, I actually shut my eyes, this string of pearls was my abhorrence; it seemed a reproach to me, from which I shrunk with horror. 'I have,' said my dear friend, 'again cheated you, my Maria! You will find the locket is changed, but I have taken care that all which was precious in the former is contained in this. Promise me to wear it,' continued she, feebly attempting to tie it round my neck; 'promise me to wear it, although the name of the unworthy Sophia Hanway is added. Promise me,' reiterated she, 'to wear it, not as the evidence of my shame, but as that of my triumph over sin.'—'Oh! give it me,' sobbed

sobbed I, grasping the locket, and dropping it into my bosom: 'never from this hour shall it have a rival in that heart on which it rests.'

"She sweetly smiled. 'I wish it not so exclusive a preference,' said she: 'as my gift, you will value it: as my legacy, I destine it to a still more noble purpose; regard it as consecrated to the service of *virtue*. You will probably marry: you may be a mother: and your children will be human... and... fallible.... Should it ever happen, alas! would that we had no better grounds than supposition! should it ever happen that they trespass on innocence, or depart from rectitude, as I have done, show them *this string of pearls*... relate to them the errors of your now dying friend... if it be possible, number to them my repentant tears... say to them, 'Thus was it with *Sophia Howway*... With the loss of probity she lost her peace and her self-esteem.... By petty fraud and mean stratagems she was conducted to pitiful subterfuges, and to a

direct violation of truth.... The exemption that these procured her from merited chastisement became the instigators to more accumulated guilt, and more hardened boldness.... till at length she was a reproach and a shame to her family.'. ...Bid them beware of concealments. They are snares to the inexperienced, and, by covering from the eyes of observation one deviating step, render retreat impracticable.'....Sophia's words were, in one respect, prophetic...She died three days after this conversation.

" My father, to whom I related what had passed in this affecting interview, informed me that Mr. Hanway had prepared him for the change which had been made in the locket. She had commissioned him to send it to town for the purpose, and had at the same time requested him to cut from her head a ringlet of hair to send with it. He complied, with an agitation which he could not conceal. She examined the lock which he had taken. 'This will not be sufficient,' said she, calmly taking up the scissars:

scissars: 'my father and Emma shall each have one from my own hand.' She then gave him instructions for Emma's locket, and, holding the three ringlets in her hand, gazed on them with fixed attention.—'What,' said she, 'are *now* the perishable honours of my head! They will serve to no purpose; for the affection of those I leave behind me stands not in need of such aids. Yet I was once proud of *this distinction:* now I sigh only for that crown which will never fade!...Be comforted, my dear father, that in this solemn hour your child tells you, with humble confidence, that she dies, not as 'those without hope.' For I know 'that my Redeemer liveth,' and that a God of mercy reigneth.'—'Mr. Hanway,' said my father, 'wept like an infant, when he related this conversation to me.....Poor man!' added he, unmindful of the big tears which chased one another down his own venerable face.

"In the first poignancy of my grief I forgot my friend's injunctions, or rather, I

was

was unequal to the observance of them. The necklace and locket were consigned to a private drawer, and my conviction of the reproach I deserved for my hasty discovery at lord V——'s prevented my wearing them for some time.

"Three years after, I married; and my father's desire and Mr. Hanway's wishes prevailed. I wore these pearls on my wedding-day, and have since occasionally done so." Mrs. Erlingford paused.

"I have been a sad guest for an invalid," said she, observing my eyes, and wiping the tears from her own. "Mr. Palmerstone will never forgive me! Let me endeavour to divert your dejection by something more cheerful.—Miss Nelson is happily married. Mr. Hanway behaved nobly on that occasion; but I never heard precisely the extent of his generosity. My good aunt became Mrs. Hanway three or four months before I changed my name. The path in the wood is now a good coach road, in order to facilitate the intercourse of the friends

friends in the gouty season, my aunt insisting on her privileges of superintending the cushions of both her patients. But this prudent provision for such exigences might have been spared; for, in fact, my father, since my marriage, is almost a stranger in his own house, and complains grievously of the burthen. I believe Mr. Erlingford will soon content them all, by taking it for our residence."

My husband's light step was now heard on the stair-case: he entered with anxious solicitude for me, and was struck with surprise and embarrassment on approaching us. Conscious that our eyes would betray us, we both looked confused: his discretion and politeness restrained his inquiries, and a momentary silence ensued. "Well," said the sprightly Mrs. Erlingford with forced gaiety, "you have now studied us long enough. Your wife is quite well; therefore do not read any thing to the contrary in her face. What think you of mine? will it suit those you have quitted? I have

indiscreetly

indiscreetly spoiled both it and my temper for the ball; so give me a sandwich, and send me home." My husband, reassured, entered into her views, and by his cheerfulness restored us to our usual spirits. I know not why my heart prompts me to sadden yours, by telling you that this charming young woman lived only two years after this period. The birth of her first child was fatal to the amiable mother. The recollection of this event, and the narrative contained in this letter, press too heavily on my mind to permit me to add more than the name of

Your affectionate mother,

A. PALMERSTONE.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

Printed by R. Taylor and Co., Shoe Lane, London.

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